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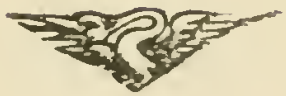

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THE LOTS UPON THE RAFT. *

SOME years ago I happened to be wind-bound in the port of L—. A furious westerly gale had set in at the full of the moon, and raged with a violence which can be appreciated only by those "who go down to the sea in ships," and "behold the wonders of the deep."

Right heartily did our hardy crew enjoy the shelter of that quaint old haven; grouped around their cheerful, cosy forecastle, the caboose giving forth a merry, homely, social blaze, they yarned away of by-gone dangers and hair-breadth escapes, which caused the older seamen to shake their heads in grave attestation of the narrators' truth, and the green boys to listen with open-mouthed wonder, thinking, and perchance hoping, that the day might come when they too should be enabled to relate similar wonders of maritime adventure.

The hurricane whistled wildly through the rigging; great sheets of surge, beaten into foam-froth over the rough breastwork of rocks under whose shelter we lay, were whirled aloft through the spars, showing against the black scud that careered above, like clouds of snow-drift flying through the pines on a dark mountain-side.

From boyhood I have been a lover of nature, in calm and in storm, in smiling peacefulness and dire

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wrath; by land and by sea have I studied her beauties; but of all the scenes I love to dwell upon is that of the sea when lashed into wild fury by the roaring tempest.

Such a scene had I now before me; in the bottom, or rather, as a sailor would call it, the "bight" of a deep bay, lay the little haven of L—, securely sheltered by a massive breakwater of granite rock; on the right, as you looked seaward, the margin was defined by rugged precipices and outlying cliffs, whilst the left hand side was bounded by a chain of lofty mountains; obliquely up this bay was now raging a south-westerly gale, hurling the giant waves of the broad Atlantic into confused masses of foaming broken water; ever and anon tremendous squalls would sweep down the hill-sides with resistless force, marking their paths by dense masses of smoke-like mist torn from the mighty surges that rolled along in solemn grandeur, until broken by crag and cliff and solid rock wall, they roared a dull great roar of impotent rage, as though they would shake earth's foundations, and open a passage to the ravening waters. Turning from the fierce battle of the elements that raged without, the peaceful security of the well-sheltered little harbour, our own good little ship looking so neat and trim, as if hugging herself in the enjoyment of such good quarters, the merry voices and jocund laugh that occasionally resounded from her decks, formed such a picture of war and peace, that being lost in silent contemplation, I was not aware of a companion until a light touch upon the arm, and the gruff tones of our tough old pilot, Murtagh Moriarty, smote upon my ear.

"Hardy weather, hardy weather, yer honour," exclaimed Murtagh, ducking his head as he spoke, to avoid a sheet of foam that arched over the rocky parapet.

"Ay, ay, pilot; for the poor fellows outside, it's rough and wild work indeed!"

"Troth, id just is what yer honer says,—wicked, wild, cruel work; an' shure id makes one's heart bleed for thim poor coasthers that's sint to say in sich wild winthery weather, an' wid vessels ill-found, wid ropes as ould and as rotten as haybands; short manned, too, the way they may bring long profits to their naygur-hearted owners; ay, in troth, yer honer, many is the brave-hearted stout sayman that has had to give in whin human nathur couldn't stand agin hardships that id break a frame uv iron; an' eh, Lord a mercy, sir dear! isn't id cruel, wringin' to a sthrong man's sperit, whin he finds himself in the pride uv his prime, an' health and sthringth, sowld maybe to save a few fathoms uv rope or a few feet uv new plank; an' hurryin' on in the broad light uv day agin the tall cliffs that stan' up like a tombstone forninst him, wid his white shroud bilin' up an' roarin' all round him!"

"Sail ho! a sail, Misthur Moriarty! A sail, Murtagh jewel!" exclaimed two or three fishermen who had joined us.

We peered anxiously to seaward, and in the intervals of the drift and mist, just under the lofty cliffs, and almost within the broad belt of snowy breakers that foamed at their base, was a gallant ship under close-reefed topsails and courses, staggering under the pressure of the latter, as if carried on with a reckless

desperation akin to despair, in order to extricate her from the fearful position into which over confidence or the thick haze of rain and surge had betrayed her.

"God be marciful! Bud by the living"—

Whatever else the old pilot would have said, died upon his lips; a mighty wall of waters came rolling down upon the hapless bark just as she was about to clear the point of greatest danger; for a moment she wavered on her course, as though her helmsman was paralyzed at the appalling peril; it was, however, for a moment only; again she lay over to the hurricane squall, until all her broad decks were visible; there was a great sheet of hissing surge boiling out from under her lee bow, which showed the tremendous velocity with which her desperate crew were forcing her through the broken water; gallantly, coolly, and with stern resolve she was held on that fearful course, as if gathering up her speed and her strength for the last great struggle to escape destruction. Already was the towering mass upon her, another moment and she would be rolled broadside on into that seething cauldron, a mass of riven planks and timbers, the chaos of despair, of death! We held our breaths in torturing anticipation of what was to follow; already the cry of the strong swimmers in their agony seemed resounding in our ears; no mortal hand could help, no human aid could reach them. Suddenly her helm was put down; as she came up in the wind the thunder of her shivering canvas sounded like the knell of doom; she lifted buoyantly to the giant sea, rose upon its advancing crest, as if with the last great effort of exhausted strength, burst through the curling

ridge of white foam, and, falling off on the other tack, disappeared from our fevered gaze in a column of spray-smoke and rain-mist.

"Bravely done! Bravely and well done!" shouted old Moriarty, in intense excitement. "Ay—ay—by my sowl, the child that sails her is no chicken! He knows every sthick in her timper, too, or he'd never thry such a divil's thrick as that wid her. If a rope yarn failed him, his sperit id be on the road to glory now. The Lord be praised for his marcy in sparin' them! Ids down on ther knees they ought to be this blessed minit?"

"Ther' no sthrangers here, anyhow, Murtagh!"

"Thrue for you, Billy Duncan, alanna, ay, indeed, that ther' not; here she comes now, squared away afore the wind; but my ould eyes are so mildewed wid the say dhrift, that I can't make out what she is at all!"

"Whisht, boys, whisht! Spake aisy, can't you? Ye'll know what she is now. Don't ye see who's comin' along the pier?"

All eyes were turned from the rapidly approaching vessel, in the direction indicated by the speaker. A tall and stately-looking female was striding along the rugged causeway, heedless alike of the furious tempest or the pitiless peltings of rain and spray. She was clothed in garments of rusty black, which barely sufficed to cover her poor weak frame, much less to protect her from the inclemency of the elements. In the hard-drawn lines of her aged and care-worn features, could be traced the vestiges of early and wondrous beauty—the wreck of one of earth's fairest

flowers. A look of patient suffering strangely contrasted with the expression of her bright dark eyes, from which a baleful, almost ferocious, fire gleamed fitfully. Her hands were clasped with feverish energy, as if in earnest, ceaseless supplication; her gaze wandered not; it was fixed upon the approaching ship. She moved through pointed rocks, and across yawning chasms, like a being of another world. Ever and anon her lips moved, as if in prayer, yet she spoke to none, nor seemed to be aware of the presence of a human being. The moment she gained the lighthouse platform she knelt at its margin, lonely, sad, and weird-looking, swaying her body backwards and forwards, her hands raised in prayer. Her voice now rose in incoherent murmurings, and anon died away; but the same intensely vengeful light gleamed ever from her eyes.

"Letty Blair, God help her!" exclaimed old Murtagh. "If I was Black Will Gardiner, I'd sooner my bones were washing under yon cliffs than face such a welkim as this afther every vy'ige!"

"For heaven's sake, Murtagh! what is the meaning of all this? Surely the poor creature must be mad; she will die from such exposure. Let us remove her to shelter and warmth."

"Hist, yer honer, hist! it's poor Letty Blair. She's goin' to curse Black Will Gardiner, the skipper of the *Gipsy Bride.*"

Meanwhile, the vessel which had caused all this excitement had drawn nigh, and her bowsprit now appeared as she rounded the pier end, in such close proximity that a man might have stepped on to her

bulwarks. Usually, when a vessel returns to her port after a voyage, there are those at hand to give the tempest-tossed mariners a cheery welcome home. Some few stragglers had joined us, but, save an odd cry of recognition, her dripping and startled-looking crew were grouped forward in sullen silence; no joyous outburst welcomed the wanderers of the deep; no triumphant cheer acknowledged the gallant battle for life that had been fought and won. No; a deep and ominous gloom appeared to hang over the ship and her crew. At this moment the appearance and movements of the captain of the *Gipsy Bride* arrested my attention. He was a man in the prime of life, of colossal stature, powerful and athletic frame, but withal of a stern, gloomy, and forbidding aspect; and if ever the face of a man gave index of the mind, his might be read without envy. His swarthy features were convulsed in a manner fearful to behold; hatred, rage, fear, despair, all the evil passions which crime entails upon its followers, reigned in turn; the veins upon his forehead stood out like knotted rope yarns; his powerful grasp clutched at everything within reach, as though he fevered to grapple with a deadly foe. The struggle for mastery over his feelings were terrible. The short quick walk along the quarter-deck ceased the moment he caught sight of that kneeling woman. He stood glaring like some ferocious beast about to spring upon his prey. A howl of torture—the pent-up cry of racking mental agony—burst from his lips. It increased into a half-shriek, half-roar. His hand shook like a man's with ague, as, pointing to the form which bent over him from the rocky platform, like

that of an avenging angel, with a burst of fearful imprecations, he thundered forth—

"Eternal fires! will no one strike that old hag from my sight?"

It was a solemn sight, accompanied by fearful sounds. That ship and her crew just gliding into the safe and sheltered haven, escaped as by a marvel of Providence from a horrible death, and instead of voices upraised in glad thanksgiving for mercy vouchsafed, to hear that awful shout of ribald blasphemy rising high above the roaring of the sea and the howling of the wind! And then that weird-looking, kneeling woman, wrapped in her graveyard garments of woe, muttering forth incoherent ejaculations, in which invocations of Heaven's wrath were strangely mingled with supplications for mercy! The visitation that destroyeth the body and the soul was prayed for in the same breath as the exemption of the innocent from the doom of the guilty! By the night or by the day, in the calm or in the storm, by the land or by the sea, sleeping or waking, in health or in sickness, that "the worm which dieth not, and the fire which is never quenched," might prey upon the spirit, blast the hope, wither the strong frame, and dry up the life's blood of William Gardiner—the outcast of God and of man!

The close of that eventful day saw the storm unabated, the good ship the *Gipsy Bride* safely moored, her captain bestowed wherever his evil spirit could best find a resting-place; the mysterious visitant of the pier, I trust, where her broken heart and fevered mind were lulled into forgetfulness of the terrible past,

and myself awaiting the pilot and his promised yarn. At length, having satisfied his craving for a pipe of Maryland, he made his appearance aft.

"I'm thinking yer honer is aiger to hear the story of poor Letty Lorimer?"

"Perhaps, Murtagh, your memory, like an old hat, would be refreshed by damping!" handing him as I spoke a stiff compound of Admiral Vernon's favourite mixture.

"Ough-ah!" coughed the old pilot, making the cabin to resound again, "bedad, it's curious, yer honer, that two of uz should be thinking the same thing!"

"Now then, pilot!" I exclaimed, "to develop this mystery that has puzzled me all day."

"Ay, yer honer. It's now many a long year since ould Clement Lorimer was a big man, an' a sthrong shipowner in this same port of L—. He owned ships that wint to a great many places beyant the say, an' his word was as good as another man's bond. Well, Clement had a daughter, the poor wake craythur yer honer seen to-day, an' och! weary me! ids myself that remimbers poor Letty Lorimer, the purtiest Colleen Dhas that every tossed a spidthers-web from a grass-brake on a May mornin', an' becoorse all the gay young chaps about these parts used to be cocking their caubeens at her, but Letty id have none of 'em; she was grand-like in her idayies, an' was given to readin' about great men that wint across the says, an' med great fortins. Well, there were two apprentices sint to ould Clement—the sons of marchints he used to have dalins wid—one was a dashin' fine young Scotchman, none uv yer hard-lined, skin-the-cat sort

of chaps, bud a great, big-hearted, jovial chap ; och ! shure, they said he was descinded from the great King Robert the Bruce ; anyhow, no matther who was at the beginning of him, he was a raal fine handsome, slashin' sailor, an' no two ways about him ; to'ther fellow, they said, was a side-wind from Spain, bud he'd an English name at all events, an' was a great big-limbed, dark-lookin' customer,—morose and self-given like—nobody fancied him, but bonny Donald Blair was in everybody's mouth ; an' the way he'd dance the reel of Tullogorum, an' sing the Laird o' Co'pen, bedad it id bring the tears into yer eyes wid fair delight. William Gardiner was ould Lorimer's favourite, at all events ; whether his people had more money nor Donald's, nobody knew rightly, bud people said that Letty was to be married to him whin he was out uv his time. Ther's always two voices to a bargain, and although Letty wasn't much consulted at first, bedad she was daytermined she'd have her own way ; so the very day Donald Blair was out uv *his* time, the two uv them sets off an' gets married hard an' fast, an' maybe there wasn't the devil's own rookaun about it ; however, Clement, sinsible-like, med the best uv the bargain his daughter got, an' had them home, an' daycently married, an' a powerful jollification ther' was ; everybody got dhrunk uv coorse, for Donald was such a favourite that nobody envied him but one, that one was Will Gardiner ; next or near the weddin' he never kem, but was black and sulky as a chained bear. I'm told 'twas dhreadful to hear the oaths he swore about the revenge he'd take on Donald Blair.

"Clement Lorimer, to make up wid him like, gev him the command uv one uv his best ships, an' to show that there was no ill-will betwixt nor between them, he sent Donald Blair out as chief mate; she was as fine a barque as ever yer honer clapped eyes on, oh! a raal beauty, called the Carlo Zeno: that was a woeful vy'ige for Donald; poor, light-hearted, gay Donald Blair, he never kem back; he was logged as washed overboord in a squall off the great Piton Rocks, near the island of Saint Lucia; there was whisperin's uv foul play, but Will Gardiner challenged 'em all, an' as the log was found all square, an' the crew spoke up, why, there the thing ended.

"Not wid poor Letty, though; the poor craythur! she never lifted her head from that day; an' the poor ould masther, too, wid all Donald's wild ways was fond uv him, for who wouldn't; the poor lad was as honest an' open-hearted as the light uv day, only fond uv his joke, an' his divarshun, small blame to him, ids a sorry sowl that goes through the world without rubbing a few bright spots in id.

"In the coorse of time the widow Blair became a mother; an' if ever the dead came to life again, the father did in that boy, only he had the mother's beauty an' all her winnin' ways to the back of all poor Donald's dash an' bravery; he grew fast, an' ould Clement began to regard him as the apple uv his eye, couldn't bear him out uv his sight for a minit; bud the dark times wor at hand, things began to go cross wid the poor ould masther,—first one ship was wracked, thin another, until, at last, the only one he had left was the Carlo Zeno.

"Well, the time kem when something must be done wid young Donald,—he'd no longer his grandfather to look to—so bedad the heritage uv his poor drowned father was bestowed upon him, and he was sint to sarve his time wid Will Gardiner: oh! but that was a sorry partin', for Clement Lorimer had parted wid his last ship to him, an' in sending his darlin' grandson wid him id seemed like a last hope that he'd bring back the fortune that was gone. Many, many was the requests he made uv Will that he'd behave to his poor boy, an' do by him what he had done for Will Gardiner to make him an honest sailor, an' a Christian man. That same night Black Will, as we always called him, had a long talk with Mrs. Blair, an' he asked her the question that had been the aim an' object of his life; he asked her to be his wife, an' to forget all she had ever loved as only a woman can love—once; but he spoke uv him that was dead and gone, of the man with whom he'd broken the same bread and drunk the same cup, as a ne'er-do-well that desarved to be forgotten—little knowin', the black-hearted villain! the woman he had to dale with. Oh, my jewel! it was Letty that up an' gev him her mind, and he left her that night wid the scowl upon his brow and the curse upon his lips.

"More nor a year passed away, and still no news uv the Carlo Zeno. The poor mother was well-nigh disthracted, and as for ould Clement, he was fairly beside himself. At last, one fine day, who should come back, as if the finger uv Fate was on him, but Black Will himself, and nobody else wid the excep-

tion of Art Sullivan, a very ould man, who was carpenter of the ship ; she had foundered at say—the crew escaped on a raft ; but, after days of awful sufferin', the only two that were picked off that fatal raft was himself and the carpenter.

"The measure of poor Clement Lorimer's bitterness was now full ; he had seen ships and money and everything pass away from him, and now the only being that bound him to earth, that his poor old wearied heart clung to, the fair golden-haired laughin' boy, whose presence was like sunshine to him, and whose life was wrapt up in his own, he was gone too, and all the world was black and dreary to him. He longed for rest, the rest that knows no brakin' 'til the last day comes, and the poor broken-hearted desolate sowl was not long findin' it. We laid him in his last restin'-place, an' all that remained of the once great shipmaster was a narrow grave and a plain little headstone; and poor Letty was left in solitary widowhood to mourn the days that wor past—too happy to be lastin' and too fleetin' to be true.

"The little that was left her she spent in charity and preparin' herself for the home where those she loved best had gone before her.

"Well, yer honer, one night Letty was tould that a dyin' man wanted to make his peace wid the world, and that he should see her.

"'Do you know me?' says he to her whin she wint into the wretched cabin, where he was lyin' on a lock uv sthraw.

"'You're Art Sullivan!' says she, 'a faithful servant of my poor father's.'

"'Ay, God help me, Miss Letty!' says he; 'I was once honest, an' had a clear conscience, bud for that black villain Will Gardiner!' says he.

"'What about him? What of him?' says she. 'Oh! Art Sullivan, asthore, machree! if you know anything of my poor lost boy—as you are now about to appear before your Judge—tell me!'

"'Listen, my poor Colleen!' says he. 'Listen—'twas for that I sint for you. Whin we escaped on the raft young Donald was safe and sound, and so wor' all the crew, but we had days and nights of awful sufferin'—hunger and thirst and the killin' heat by day soon sent most of them mad, and they jumped into the say, where the sharks made short work of them, and the rest died of fair starvation. At last, none were left but Will Gardiner, myself, and young Donald Blair. Oh! but he was a brave fine boy! he kept our spirits goin', day by day, and bid us cheer up, although the poor darlin's bones wor' peepin' thro' his skin. That terrible man had a little store of rum and biscuit, for I kept my eye on him night an' day, and when he knew I had discovered him, he gave me a taste now and then, but never a morsel nor a sup would he give the brave child that was dyin' before his face. I took it, and I tried to make the little Donald swallow some; but no, he had the sperit of a lion. "No!" he used to whisper, and his little eyes would flash,—"What the black rascal would not give to the poor men that's gone shall never pass my lips!" It was a just rebuke to myself, a big man, to hear that from the lips of a child; but I was wake and feeble, and the great black thief was sthrong

thro' his own cowardly selfishness—so, what could I do? When a man is driven to death by inches, he craves for life more than ever—pride, manliness, everything is wake in him; but that boy was a hero, if ever there was one born. At last the day came that all was gone; another and another followed, and Black Will Gardiner stooped over me and whispered a horrid timptation, for, says he, "if we can only prolong life a couple of days more, we'll be sure to fall in wid some of the homeward-bounders!" My blood curdled at his word; but as the day wore on, and no sign uv a sail, he spoke to me again; but I swore at him, and he swore at and cursed me, and called me a drivellin' old fool to cant about mercy to a worthless brat. I wondther now he did not throw me overboard, but the coward was afraid of his conscience—he feared being alone. At last, he spoke out bold, and said the time was come we should draw lots for life—one must die to keep the others alive. The lots were drawn, and, God forgive him and me! *the lots were drawn falsely*, and poor little Donald—O God, shield that sight from my memory!—there was that arch-demon struggling wid that poor small child. I screamed; I tried to rise and help and save him; but no, I was feebler than he was, and at last the blow was struck; ay, God forgive him, that man-devil! he murdered poor little Donald—he drank of his blood and he eat of his flesh, and he forced it upon me, too, and bound me by fearful oaths never to reveal what I do now, but I could not die aisy. Oh, mercy! mercy, Miss Letty! I am goin'—I am'— The wild cry alone answered, the spirit of

the old man had fled, and with it the senses of poor Letty Blair."

"And is it possible, Murtagh?" I exclaimed, "that nothing has ever been done about this?"

"God bless yer honer!" said the old man, "what could we do? Letty told me the story herself in a few odd clear moments she had after the first shock passed away, bud then she got worse than ever. Our only witness was dead, and who would take a man's life on the word of a poor crazed woman? Bud his day will come, yer honer, sooner or later! The finger is on him, sure an' fixed! He tried sailin' from other ports, bud he always comes back to this. Bud tell me, yer honer," said the old man with intense eagerness, "do you believe in the appearance of sperits from the other world?"

"Why do you ask the question?"

"Because poor Letty often wandthers by the say-side, and says that she is talking to little Donald; and thin she kneels down beside old Clement's grave, and whispers to him to be of good cheer, that little Donald is comin' to him, and that she is comin' too, but that she must wait for Will Gardiner; and, sure enough, when we see her doin' this, we know he is not far off; and let it be by day or by night that he comes back, there she kneels upon that platform of rock—the first that he sees whin he comes, and the last whin he goes away. God forgive her poor wanderin' broken sperit, it's not Christian-like, but shure she knows no better—she asks for her poor lost son—once the pride of the heart that shall never bloom again, the light of the eyes that shall never

sparkle more but in madness. Terrible will be the fate of the man that wrongs the widowed and the fatherless!"

The old pilot ceased, and I shall do the same, good reader. I tell you the tale as it was told to me; and, for aught I know, the poor maniac mother may still frequent the little pier of L—, and Black Will Gardiner may still be prosperous; but, as sure as the old pilot said it, his day will come.

I need hardly say that the names I have introduced are not the real ones.

A NIGHT IN A HAUNTED HOUSE.

BEING A PASSAGE IN THE LIFE OF MR. MIDAS OLDWYCHE.

THE festival we lately celebrated (I mean All-fools'-day) always brings to my mind a most singular adventure which happened to me in 1837, while staying for the Easter holidays at Bleaklawns, my old schoolfellow Harry Fenwick's place in the north of Ireland. The way it came about was-this.

It was a rude evening in the end of March (Easter, it will be recollected, fell early that year); half a score of neighbours, including the clergyman of the parish and his wife, had dined at Bleaklawns, and we were sitting in a close-drawn circle about the great, old-fashioned parlour chimney, and listening to the wind as it roared in the leafless trees, and wailed and sobbed at the windows of the house, almost like a human being.

To such an accompaniment it is not wonderful that the conversation ran on shipwrecks and perils of the deep, and that from this subject it passed, by an easy transition, to that of murders. Hence, at the instance of a fair member of our conclave, whose tongue bore the slightest touch of the music of Munster, and who voted murders commonplace, it was on the point of leaping the grave, and going headlong into the chapter of ghost stories, when two of the company entered a protest.

I was one. I objected to ghost stories, on the ground of their manifest antagonism to the spirit of an enlightened nineteenth century. The other protesting party went on opposite grounds. This was a young lady who had come from a greater distance than the other guests, and was to sleep at Bleaklawns, and who declared that if she were to hear a ghost story in an old house like that, where it was impossible not to believe in such things, she would not be able to close an eye for terror the whole night.

Our hostess, upon this, observed, for the encouragement of her young guests, that at Bleaklawns there was happily no occasion for fears of the kind; since, ancient as the house certainly was, it had never had the reputation of being haunted, nor had either its present, nor, as far as she knew, any former occupants, ever experienced any disturbances in it which they were tempted to refer to supernatural causes.

"Well, do you know," said another of the party (a rather forward young fellow, who was but lately come to the neighbourhood), "I think that almost a pity. Such a house as this *ought* to be haunted. We must try and conjure a ghost into it, Harry, out of the old Fenwick vault under the church. Perhaps Mr. Hammond would lend us a helping hand. What would you think, sir, of reading the burial-service backwards?"

The clergyman looked grave, and said Mr. Fenwick should be very thankful that his house was free from all intrusions of the world beyond the tomb;

and that the subject was by no means one to be treated in a light and jesting spirit. To this our host agreed; and added, that Mr. Emerson (that was the forward man's name) himself would adopt a very different tone with respect to such matters, if he were to spend a short time in some houses to which he (Harry Fenwick) could give him an introduction.

"Harry," said I, "I'm not quite sure that I understand you. Do you mean to say that there are houses in England, or, indeed, anywhere else, in which such things as Mr. Emerson—jestingly, I am sure—just now spoke of, are really to be met with?"

"Fifty," answered Fenwick, "to my own knowledge."

"Haunted houses!" said I.

"Houses," replied he, "which the people who live in them believe to be haunted; houses in which things are heard and seen, which there is no explaining, but on the supposition that they *are* haunted."

"But the nineteenth century"— began I.

"My dear fellow," interrupted Fenwick, "if you can get the other world to believe in the nineteenth century, your business is done; but the misfortune is, you can't; and so, in spite of the nineteenth century, the houses I tell you of are haunted."

"But what kind of houses?—houses belonging to what class of people?" demanded Mr. Emerson, "for a great deal depends upon that."

"Parsonage-houses," answered Harry, "some of them; and some, houses like this; and some, houses belonging to respectable people in the middle class,

people quite as well able to form a judgment upon the subject as any one here."

"I should be glad," said I, "to have an opportunity of passing some time in one of these houses. I shrewdly suspect I should find a clue to the mystery: an unprejudiced person, whose mind is previously made up on the subject of investigation, is not so easily put on a false scent."

"Then you would like to spend a night in a haunted house?" cried my old schoolfellow.

"In a house having the reputation of being haunted," answered I, "by all means."

"Then, by all means, you shall," said he; "there is a house not five miles off that will just suit you. I have no doubt that I can get you leave to pass a night in it; and if you come out of it in the morning, and talk to us of the nineteenth century, I give you up."

"Mr. Fenwick," said the clergyman, "I must express my hope that you will reflect very seriously on what you are about to do, before you determine on sending your friend to that awful house. And you, my dear sir," added he, turning to me, "would also do well not to play with things, the dark and terrible nature of which you are far from being aware of."

I was astonished. "What! reverend sir," I exclaimed, "am I to understand that you, a clergyman, and, as I can afford my humble testimony from having listened to your most excellent, most edifying, and most logical discourse on Sunday last, a clergyman of no ordinary amount of talent, of erudition,

and of sound good sense—am I, I would ask, to understand that *you* attach credit to the exploded tales handed down to us from an age groping in the darkness of an unreasonable superstition?—that you, in fact, believe in what are called ghosts?"

"I am sorry to say," was the clergyman's answer, "that I have had proof—proof most unwelcome—that the tales of which you speak are not so idle as the present age is too generally disposed to believe."

"That you have seen ghosts!"

"No, not seen; but I have certainly had indications of the proximity of a being no longer of this earth. I have heard sounds which could not otherwise be accounted for; and Mrs. Hammond, and other members of our household, have not only heard, but have actually seen the being in question."

"Bless my soul!" said I; "this is a most surprising circumstance. And a gentleman *so* collected in the pulpit. May I, reverend sir, pray you to put me in possession of the circumstances of this very extraordinary case of what you will pardon me for calling mental hallucination. It will be of advantage to *all* the company to hear them explained."

"I must begin, then," commenced the clergyman, "by mentioning that, before my being appointed to the living which I now hold, I was for a short time curate at Wester Hilton, a market-town between four and five miles from this place. When I first went to that curacy, which was about fifteen years ago, strange reports were current about a house in the outskirts of

the town, which was said to be haunted; and although I laughed at these things when they first came to my ears, yet, finding that the whole town believed them, that sober, business-like people—the last I could suppose to be given to anything like romancing or flights of fancy—spoke of them as undoubted facts, and that the owner of the house (a gentleman of the name of Greenborn) could neither live in it himself, nor get any one to take it off his hands—so that it had now for some years past stood empty—I felt myself compelled to believe that there was something very extraordinary in the matter, although I was still very far from going the length of supposing that there was anything preternatural.

"To come to particulars—it was said that all kinds of inexplicable noises were continually heard in the house, chiefly at night, but sometimes even in the daytime; that the most frequent sound was that of a person walking through the rooms, or up and down the stairs; and, what was most curious, that the steps were like those of a club-footed person—that, in fact, it was not so much a walking as an uncouth kind of stumping that was heard, and which could not be listened to without feelings of the most strangely disagreeable kind. It was said that the doors would often open and shut of themselves, as the footsteps went into or out of the rooms, and that, still oftener, the *sound* of the opening or shutting of a door would be heard, while to the eye the door remained unmoved. Frequently sighs were heard; sometimes, though not often, a slight laugh, and sometimes a low whispering that would continue for

hours together, as if the being that made all these noises were talking to itself as it stumped along. It was not often that anything had been actually seen, though this had occurred too, the form of a woman having appeared to more than one person, at different times, when the club-feet were distinctly to be remarked. But it was observed that when the form was seen, the steps were inaudible, the spirit never manifesting itself to more than one sense at the same time. However, if two persons were together, it would sometimes be heard but not seen by the one, while it would be seen but not heard by the other.

"A circumstance that most painfully spoke for the authenticity of these stories was this: the apparition had been seen by the maiden sister of Mr. Greenborn, and the shock had been so great as to derange her mind. This lady had the misfortune to have distorted feet, and the spectre appeared to her a perfect duplicate of herself: her insanity took the horrible form of fancying herself the spectre, and she was living in retirement and under restraint, in another house of her brother's, at the opposite side of the town.

"I was unmarried at this time, but an engagement already subsisted between me and the lady who is now my wife; and our union was delayed only till I should have got properly settled in my curacy, and be in possession of a suitable dwelling to bring my bride to. On first arriving at Wester Hilton, I had taken a small lodging sufficient for a single man, and then proceeded to make inquiries about a house, intending to see everything that was to be disposed

of in the little town, and to choose the most agreeable. However, a month passed over, and I had met with nothing that would answer; another month, and I was no nearer to the object of my quest; a third month had begun, still no prospect of settlement, and all the impatience of an engaged man chafing in my breast! All at once I thought of Mr. Greenborn's house. It was a good house, and agreeably situated, had a nice garden, was out of the noise of the town—in fact it was the very place a newmarried lady would like to come home to. Why not take it at once? To be sure, there was all that talk about its being haunted, but how absurd it would be to suffer myself to be influenced by such nonsense! What rational being, in these days, believed in a haunted house? No, I would show the Wester Hiltonians that they had an enlightened man among them; I would make them ashamed of their superstition; I would put down the foolish tale which had so long frighted their town from its propriety: in short, my dear sir, I was extremely impatient to marry, and I wrote to Mr. Greenborn, proposing to become his tenant for the haunted house.

"Mr. Greenborn was glad to get a tenant, and let me have the house on reasonable terms. He wrote to his man of business at Wester Hilton, to put me in possession, and, next day, the town talked of nothing but the curate's impiety, and how shocking it was to have to listen to the sermons of a man who did not believe in the other world. It was not long before I had proofs that my acceptableness among the Hiltonians had received a serious shock; my

pastoral visits seemed scarcely welcome—fewer hats were lifted as I passed through the streets—and some of the more zealous parishioners walked out of church when I ascended the pulpit. I believe the people would have broken my windows if they had not been afraid that it might be taken amiss by the ghost. However, I comforted myself by thinking all this would pass off, and pushed forward the preparations for bringing home my bride. Meantime, I retained my lodging, feeling a sort of repugnance which I did not care too curiously to analyze, to sleep in my new house alone. At length all was ready, and, leaving the house in charge of a rough, fearless fellow, whom Mr. Greenborn had already had in it as a caretaker, I went my ways, married, and brought home *that* lady"—with a smile and a nod towards Mrs. Hammond—"as my wife."

"I must confess that I did not act quite fairly towards her—I told her nothing about the ghost. The motive I assigned to myself for this concealment was fear of making her uneasy; but I am afraid, at bottom, there lurked another fear—that of its leading to a delay of our marriage. Well, as I said, we came home; my wife's mother accompanied us, and we brought with us a man and a maid-servant, whom I had engaged in another place, besides a maid of my wife's mother's, a Frenchwoman, who neither spoke nor understood a word of English.

"The morning after our arrival, my mother-in-law said, at breakfast, that she had been disturbed, she did not know how, during the night. She had fallen asleep soon after lying down, and slept, she thought,

some hours, very soundly, when, on a sudden, she had awoke all at once, and though she could not say she had heard anything, she had had, in the most distinct manner possible, the feeling of having been called and awakened, as if by some person come for the purpose to her bedside. She always slept with a light in her room, and on awaking in this singular way, she had sat up in the bed, and looked with great anxiety about her; all was still, however, in the chamber, but an oppressive sense of fear, which she could not account for, continued to disquiet her for some hours, and she had not fallen asleep again till towards daybreak.

"At hearing this, I confess I was not without some stirrings of conscience; however, I put them down, and told my mother-in-law she had, no doubt, had an attack of nightmare, occasioned, probably, by the fatigue of the journey, and that I hoped she would rest better the next night. It happened that that day was very wet and stormy, and nobody left the house. In the evening I heard our man-servant asking the maid what was the matter with 'Mamzell,' that she had been *walking about all day on her heels.* The maid replied that she knew nothing about it, but supposed it was some of her Popery. Now, I knew very well that 'Mamzell' had *not* been walking about on her heels, having spent the day in reading some French book—I remember it was *Florian's Tales*—to her mistress. I confess the man's expression brought the *club-feet* to my mind in an unpleasant manner; however, I had made an irrevocable determination not to believe in the ghost, and to hold the rats responsible

for all unaccountable noises I might hear, or hear of, in the house. I therefore continued to keep my own counsel, and was glad to observe, at bed-time, that my mother-in-law's thoughts did not seem at all to be running on her disturbance of the preceding night.

"The next morning my wife awoke in a state of singular agitation of spirits, for which she could assign no cause. She felt, she said, as if something had been related to her, which was at the same time very melancholy and very absurd, and which had excited in her mind emotions of pity and horror, so startlingly mixed up with a sense of the ridiculous, that the most painful conflict of feelings was the result. I asked her if she had had any dream, the recollection of which affected her in this disagreeable way; but she answered that, although she had some vague consciousness of having dreamed during the night, no trace of what the dream had been about remained in her memory—only the feeling she had described rested on her like a load which she could not shake off, and filled her with an uneasiness unlike anything she had ever before experienced. This disturbed me, I will not deny, seriously. If the ghost (supposing it to exist) could extend its influence into the region of sleep—could approach the soul in her dreams—could inspire dark terrors, of which the mind could give no account to itself—could act directly upon the feelings, and depress and agitate them at its pleasure, without affording any clue to its mode of operation, any notice of the moment of its assault—what could exceed the horror of our situa-

tion?—what was to hinder madness, as in poor Miss Greenborn's case, from being the end of it? But then, I thought again, all this was supposition. Who could say that any preternatural influence had had a share in producing my wife's state of feeling? Supposing she had had a frightful dream, which had faded from her memory, but left its effect upon her nerves, what reason had I to conclude that she would not have had the same dream anywhere else as here? The probability was that she was not well—that she was nervous, perhaps feverish; and I resolved that I would call on the doctor in the course of the morning, and ask him to see her.

"Well, at breakfast we met my mother-in-law, who, as I saw at a glance, had had another disturbed night. She looked worn and unrefreshed, and told us she had been awakened just as the first night, suddenly, out of a profound sleep; had felt the same indefinable dread, which lasted some hours, and then passed off all at once; and had again lain awake until towards the approach of morning.

"'Nightmare, my dear madam, again,' said I; 'the effect of your having been confined to the house all day yesterday.'

"'But I'm not subject to nightmare,' pleaded the good lady; 'I never had nightmare in my life.'

"'No doubt the strange bed,' said I, 'had something to do with it. Emma herself did not sleep well either, and I think, my dear madam, the doctor must have a little conversation with both you and her by and by.'

"Indeed, my wife's looks told as plainly as her mother's, though in a different way, of the effects of

a disturbed rest. She was pensive, pre-occupied, had a peculiar expression of perplexity in her countenance, like that of one to whom some illusion is presenting itself with all the vividness of a reality, and who, half conscious of the cheat, is struggling either to be quite illuded or quite undeceived. To her mother she gave the same account of her feelings as to me: an impression, she said, of having come to the knowledge of something extremely sad, and at the same time extremely ludicrous, had got possession of her in such a way, that, although she knew how groundless it was, she could not get rid of it. Whence this impression came—from a dream, or from what other source—she knew not; but there it was, and, spite of all she did to reason it away, there it remained, weighing her down with a sense of inquietude which she in vain struggled to cast off, and so drawing her thoughts in its own direction, that it was not without an effort she turned them to other subjects.

"She begged, however, and her mother joined in the request, that I would not think of sending for the doctor that day; the weather was fine, she would go out, the air would revive her, a walk would do good both to her and mamma, and things would get right again without the help of physic; or should these means fail, she would not object to the doctor's being called in on the morrow.

"The house, as I mentioned before, was situated in the outskirts of the town, and there were green lanes, and footpaths leading over stiles and under hedgerows, from one field to another, in its neighbourhood. By these pleasant ways I led my wife and her

mother a stroll of some hours, and, when we came back, Mrs. Hammond was really so much cheered up, and altogether so different from what she had been in the morning, that I began to think we should, after all, be able to do without the doctor.

"But, on coming home, I found new perplexities awaiting me. No sooner had I entered the house than John (our man-servant), with a face of great mystery, begged I would let him speak to me in private. I gave him an audience, and he told me a sufficiently curious story.

"He had been brushing my clothes, he said, in the hall, and, he confessed, making a great dust, when he heard, as he thought, the French *Mamzell* coming down-stairs, walking in a sort of Popish way she had lately taken to—on her heels. He stopped brushing, that she might not be incommoded by the dust as she passed; however, there was still quite a cloud of it in the hall and up the stairs, and he was not at all surprised to hear her sneeze once or twice on her way down. But when she came, as he judged by the sound of the steps, to the landing-place at the top of the last flight of stairs, leading down into the hall, and which was full in his view, he *was* surprised, for he saw nobody! The steps, nevertheless, continued audibly coming down towards him—stump-stump, stump-stump—till they reached the bottom of the stairs, came on directly for the spot where he was standing, passed, not *by*, but, as it were, *through* him, as if he had been so much air, and the next moment were heard behind him, going along the hall towards the street door. After the lapse of about a

minute, they were heard as if coming back; again they seemed to go through him (he, however, not *feeling* anything as he was thus permeated), and finally they went up-stairs in the same stumping manner as they had come down, leaving John in a state of amazement to which no words could do justice.

"He had said nothing, John added, of all this to the maid, as he saw no use in frightening her, and perhaps making her unwilling to stay in the house. As for him, he was not afraid; he had a good conscience, and besides, with a clergyman in the house, he thought there could not be much danger. He had considered it his duty to tell me, both *as* a clergyman and as his master; but, if he might venture to speak, he would say, in his humble judgment, it was better 'missez' and the other females should hear nothing about it.

"It is curious that at this very time Betsy, our maid-servant, was making a communication to her mistress, not less startling and mysterious than John's to me. Several times that forenoon, as she was alone in her kitchen, she had plainly felt something brush by her, or had found herself jostled, as if some person whose footing was not steady had staggered against her in passing. There was no sound accompanying this, and poor Betsy could not tell what to think of it. She had observed silence respecting it to her fellow-servant, lest he should laugh at her.

"Thus, John and Betsy had each a secret from the other, and the same was the case between my wife and me, for she feared to teaze me with the maid's story, and I feared to frighten her with the man's.

"The night came, and the morning in due time followed. My wife was in the very same state as the morning previous; had had she knew not what dream, of which no trace remained at awaking but in the tone it had given to her spirits; if possible, her agitation and distress were greater on this than the preceding day, and I saw that the matter would not brook being trifled with. At breakfast I learned that my mother-in-law had had her usual night's unrest, and no sooner was the meal despatched than I went to look for the doctor, accompanied by whom, I speedily came back to my two invalids.

"The doctor was one of the few Hiltonians who did not believe in our ghost, and who continued my good friend after the scandal I had given by becoming the tenant of the haunted house. Having been informed that my wife was troubled with unpleasant dreams at night, and consequent agitation of mind during the day, he felt her pulse, told her that she was nervous, but he would soon have her herself again, and then began to chat on general subjects.

"In the course of conversation he came on the subject of our house, and asked me if I had ever heard the history of its first possessor. On my replying in the negative, he said that the house had been built, about ninety years before, by a lady of the Greenborn family, who was said to have been a great beauty, as far as the face and upper part of the figure were concerned, but who unfortunately had club-feet. A young gentleman, who saw this lady in her box at the theatre one evening, fell in love with her, met her next day in an open carriage in the park, and a mutual

acquaintance being by good luck at hand, got introduced to her on the spot, rode two hours at the side of her carriage, called the next morning to hope she had caught no cold, and, in short, made such good use of his time, that in less than a month they were a betrothed couple, and their wedding-day fixed. All this time the gentleman had never, except on that one occasion in the theatre, seen the lady anywhere out of her own house, but in the open carriage; and at home he always found her sitting on a particularly low sofa, her hooped petticoat spreading in such a wide waste of satin over the floor all round her, that not only were her feet invisible, but it was impossible to guess whereabouts they were. Thus he remained without a suspicion of the truth, until, on the very morning of the day that was to make her his own for ever, fate willed that a boy carrying a green bag should come up just at the moment that he was knocking at the door. The door opened, the gentleman was stepping in, when the boy took a pair of nondescript objects out of his bag, and handed them to the servant with the words, 'Miss Greenborn's shoes.' The bridegroom's eye rested on them. 'Are those Miss Greenborn's shoes?' he asked, in an accent of horror. The servant look confused, but the boy answered ingenuously, 'Yes, sir.' 'And,' faltered the unhappy gentleman, his gaze rivetted on the dreadful tell-tales, 'they fit her?' 'Oh, bless you, to be sure,' replied the boy, in a cheerful tone; 'all the ladies and gentlemen as has got them kind of feet in Lunnun deals with master, and he have the knack of fitting of 'em, just as if they was reg'lar Christians.' The

gentleman did not say another word; he stared wildly a moment at the boy, then turning about, ran down the steps, climbed into the carriage that had brought him to the place, drove to the nearest hotel, took post-horses down to Dover, and embarked by that night's packet for the Continent. The lady never saw him again, and the servant's report of what had happened left no doubt of the cause of his sudden disappearance. She left town, and shut herself up in her house at Wester Hilton, where, some say, she died of a broken heart, others, of the influenza, and others, again, maintain that she hanged herself in her garters.

"While the doctor related this story, my wife looked like a person on whose mind the solution of a great riddle is dawning, and as he pronounced the concluding words, she exclaimed, 'That is what I have dreamed these two nights past. I remember it all now.' She then told us that this very story had been related to her, both the last night and the night preceding, by the unfortunate lady herself; and though it had till this moment so entirely eluded her waking memory, the lively feelings of sympathy with which she had listened to it in her sleep had continued to tingle on, even when she could not recall their origin. The lady, she added, by her own account, had not hanged herself, but really died of a broken heart, which the people about her mistook for the influenza.

"It was very remarkable that, from the time my wife was able to tell her dream, its effects on her spirits went off, and her composure and cheerfulness

returned. In fact, the change was so obvious, that the doctor gave up all idea of prescribing for her, and expressed a desire to see his other patient, for my mother-in-law had not been present at the conversation. My wife went to look for her, and when the doctor found himself alone with me, he could not help expressing his wonder at the circumstance, that the history of Miss Greenborn should have been the subject of a dream to a person who had never heard of it. With true medical scepticism, however, he resolved the difficulty by supposing either that my wife *had* heard the story before, and forgotten it, or that she did but fancy now that it had been the subject of her forgotten dream. I was not quite satisfied by his solution, and told him of the stumping and sneezing which had been heard by John the day before. But he had a very ready explanation for this: the rogue, he said, had certainly heard all about the club-footed ghost from some one in the town, and he had trumped up his story, merely for the sake of being listened to by his master.

"After a few minutes my wife returned, accompanied by her mother. On hearing what the good lady complained of, the doctor said the only thing he would prescribe for her was an attendant to sleep in her room. She was quite well, he assured her, and to give her anything to make her sleep would be to do her a great injury; a few nights more would accustom her to her new bed; she should go out, too, every day, and she would soon sleep as well as ever she had done in her life. In the meantime, as long as watchfulness did continue to trouble her, the

presence of another person in the room would prevent her feeling it dreary.

"The doctor now took his departure, leaving us all in much better spirits than he had found us, and the day passed without anything remarkable occurring. We walked out, as the day before; and the air, the sunshine, and the face of the earth and waters put to flight all lingering shadows which the night had left in our souls. A bed was put in my mother-in-law's room for her own maid, Annette, and at the end of this day we retired to rest in a more tranquil and cheerful mood than we had done since our first night in the haunted house.

"Yet this night was the last we were to spend in it. The horror became too great to be endured, and the next morning I removed my whole household to a lodging which yielded far inferior accommodation in many respects, but where, at least, whatever inconveniences we had to submit to arose from earthly causes. But you shall hear how the night was passed.

"I might have slept about an hour, when I was awoke by my wife, who, in a voice that expressed an agony of terror, asked me if I heard nothing. I listened—and it is impossible to describe to you the icy feel that crept over me, as I distinctly heard a low wailing and sobbing, as if of a person in the bitterest grief, and which it was impossible to doubt for a moment was in the room. Never did human tones meet my ear that gave such an impression of utter and desperate sorrow as that crying did: my own heart was wrung, even to weeping, as I listened to it, in the midst of all the horror which I felt at the

thought that a being was near me whose life was not of the earth—for in the character of the tones I felt there was something *not* earthly. Shrill, and wild, and yet not rising above a kind of sighing whisper, they were like shrieks heard from a great distance, or like the faint cries of a dreaming man, who tries to shout. It was some moments before I could collect resolution to ask who was there; when I did so, there was no answer, nor were the sounds of woe interrupted. I got up and struck a light, but there was no one to be seen in the room but ourselves, and still the wailing continued. I approached the part of the room from which the tones proceeded, till it seemed to me that the invisible mourner was close to my face; I put out my hand, but no substance encountered its touch. I made a step in advance, and felt that I was standing on the same spot—filling the same space—with a being whom I could not see, but whose voice I still heard distinctly, and now as if coming out of my own breast! Seized with insupportable horror, I sprang forward, and the sounds of lamentation were behind me. I thought now of what had been told me by John; this mysterious being had passed through him, or he through it, as if he had been air; and so had I now passed through the space occupied by it. And yet this being, to which body was no obstacle, and which was itself no obstacle to body, was no unsubstantial shadow, for John had heard its footsteps, and I was at this moment listening to its voice. Such things, told me three days before, I would have scouted, as contradicting the laws which govern the universe; but this night taught me to

suspect that there were 'more things in heaven and earth than—' you know the rest of the quotation.

"All hope of sleep was gone. I lay down in bed, but left the light burning; and now my wife told me, in broken whispers, what had happened the maid the day before,—a confidence which I requited in kind, by imparting to her, in the same suppressed accents, all about John and the footsteps.

"'This is a dreadful house,' said my wife; 'I never believed in such things before, but you may depend on it, it is haunted by the club-footed lady.'

"Scarcely had she spoken these words when stumping footsteps were heard approaching the bed. Our hearts beat aloud with terror; but at the moment that the steps reached the bedside all was still, and an air, as of the charnel, seemed to float around us, for perhaps half a minute, and then passed gradually away.

"That, I may say, was the drop that made the cup overflow. My wife lay more dead than alive, and it was only the necessity of supporting her that enabled me to preserve some remains of composure. As soon as she had in some degree recovered herself, I promised her that we should leave the house at as early an hour as possible next morning, and rather submit to be lodged less roomily, for a while, than once more encounter what we had been this night exposed to. But the terrors of the night were not yet at an end.

"My mother-in-law slept in the room over ours, and, as I have mentioned, her maid Annette, on this night, shared her bedchamber. While my wife and I were talking over our designs for the morrow, we

suddenly heard the good lady's voice overhead, in a loud and anxious tone, calling 'Annette!'—a piercing shriek from the maid succeeded. We were both on our feet in a moment, and hastily wrapping ourselves in whatever lay nearest, we flew up-stairs. On entering the room, we found the girl sitting up in her bed, her face white, her eyes dilated, pointing with frantic terror towards my mother-in-law, who lay in her own bed, apparently awake, but motionless, and with an indescribable character of anxiety and indefinable distress stamped on her features, like one suffering under an attack of nightmare. 'There, there,' cried the girl, in her own language, 'don't you see it? It lies where *madame* lay but this moment. Ah! *mon Dieu*, I see them both lying in the same place!' I followed the direction of her finger, but saw only my mother-in-law, lying in the state I have already described; but my wife clung almost fainting to my arm, and whispered, scarce audibly, 'I see it!' I asked what she saw, but she could only say, 'Take my mother out of the bed—I will help you.'

"Wrapping the good lady in the bedclothes, we lifted her up, though not without difficulty, for she was perfectly cataleptic, every muscle rigid as iron, and her body weighing like a mass of lead. But the moment we had succeeded in drawing her aside a little, both the rigidity and the preternatural weight all at once disappeared, the haggard look passed from her countenance, and she came to herself in a way that I can only give you an idea of, by saying that it seemed as if a spell had been broken.

"However, we brought her down-stairs, followed by Annette, whom no power on earth could induce to remain in the room a moment by herself, and who trembled and sobbed hysterically, as she collected her mistress's and her own clothes; for it was determined that all should dress, and that there should be no talk of going to bed again in the house. Leaving the good lady and her maid with my wife, therefore, to put themselves in a condition to stay up, I went to call the other servants, that we might have fires lighted, and pass the night with as little discomfort as circumstances would permit.

"John was awake, and seemed very glad when I told him to get up and dress himself. He had heard *the heels*, he said, stumping about the house, more than once during the night, and the doors of different rooms opening and shutting, and had not been able to close an eye for uneasiness; though he had a good conscience, he said, too—to say nothing of the encouragement he found in thinking that his master was a clergyman. Betsy I found not only awake, but up and dressed: she had been afraid to go to bed, and was sitting at the window of her room, which she had opened for the sake of company. The poor soul had had a dreadful fright, and was crying bitterly; her candle had been blown out, and her foot trod on by she could not tell what strange animal in the dark, and she hoped I would not take it amiss, but she was going to-morrow. She knew she must forfeit her wages, but gold would not pay for what she endured in that house; and her only regret was, in leaving without giving 'missez'

time to suit herself. I told her we were all going to-morrow, so that there would be no need of parting; and comforted her much by the intelligence that all in the house were up, and that she would find John in the kitchen.

"On meeting in the breakfast room, in which a good fire was soon blazing, my wife and I on one side, and my mother-in-law and her maid on the other, compared notes on the night's disturbances. My mother-in-law and she had awakened as usual, with the impression of having been called, and, feeling the same vague inquietude as on former nights, had waked Annette for company; that, presently after, the sense of suffocating oppression and nameless dread, the approaches of which she now knew so well, had come over her, and from that time she had lain unconscious, but deprived of all power of speech and motion, until my wife and I removed her from the place she was lying in, when it had seemed to her as if she had been taken out of an atmosphere in which she could not breathe, into the pure air, and her faculties had returned to her at once.

"Annette's account was this: on awaking at her mistress's call, she saw a woman, with frightfully misshapen feet, in the act of stepping up on the bed of the good lady. Her first thought was, that it was a crazy person, who by some accident had got into the house; but what was her horror when she saw the woman lie down, not *beside* her mistress, but in the very place where the latter was already lying! This was what had drawn from her the shriek which had reached our ears. At first, the

woman's figure had, as it were, seemed to obliterate that of her mistress; but as her eyes dwelt longer on the horrid object, the lineaments of both forms were plainly visible to her, each filling the place, yet neither displacing the other, as if two transparent pictures were laid together, and held up between the beholder and the light!

"Something of the same kind had been seen by my wife. As she looked at her mother lying on the bed, the uncertain contour of another shape had seemed to her to blend dimly with that of the known one, bewildering her eye in the manner which is experienced when *two shapes of the same object* illude the vision, the one *almost* covering the other, but the baffling outlines refusing to merge into singleness, and to give to the sense the impression of that unity which the understanding is convinced of.

"The next morning, as I said, we left the house, to the great triumph of the Wester Hiltonians, to whom I had the satisfaction of perceiving that my ministry now became more acceptable than ever. I was a convert to their way of thinking, and they set more store by me than by ninety and nine who had never been in the wrong about the haunted house, and had no need to be converted.

"That's the end of my story, my dear sir, and I have to apologize to you, and indeed to all our friends, here, for making it so long."

I will not relate the conversation which ensued on the end of the clergyman's narrative. Suffice it to say, that I was not brought over, by anything that it contained, to the side of the superstitious party. I

explained all that he and his family had experienced —or seemed to themselves to have experienced—in Mr. Greenborn's house, by the well-known agency of the imagination ; and on his asking me, with the air of a man who thinks himself armed with a real poser, how could so many people imagine the same thing, I replied that nothing was more easily accounted for, this being nothing more than a curious—and I would not deny it to *be* a curious coincidence. I believe the clergyman felt that I was too many for him, for, after this answer, he did not try me again.

However, what I had heard added to the liveliness of my wish to pass a night in the house of which such absurd stories were related. What Mr. Hammond had failed in I would accomplish ; I felt that it was an achievement reserved for me, to disenchant the Wester Hiltonians, to slay their dragons, and enable them to call their town their own—for surely it was not their own, so long as they abandoned one house that it contained to the possession of a pretended denizen of the other world.

Harry Fenwick was as anxious as I that I should pass a night in the "haunted house," though his views, in desiring it, were different from mine. He wished to win me over to the dark ages ; I, to gain him, and all his neighbourhood, for the nineteenth century. But my concern was not with his motives, and I thankfully accepted his offer of writing to Mr. Greenborn, to obtain me permission to undertake the enterprise I was bent on.

Mr. Greenborn's consent was readily given. Indeed, there was nothing that he wished more than that

somebody might get to the bottom of the mystery attaching to his house; and, from the way in which Harry Fenwick wrote (as I suppose he did) of me, no doubt he saw that I, if any one, was the person to fathom it.

It was on Saturday, the first of April, that my preparations for the exploit were completed, and, late in the evening, I sallied forth in Harry's gig, with a man-servant of his from a distant part of the country to drive me, for Wester Hilton. In the gig was a basket, containing a bottle of Madeira, and other materials for a cold supper, besides a couple of books, and a brace of pistols. For fire and light, I reckoned upon the caretaker (the same Mr. Hammond had found there), an Irishman, as I was informed, of the name of Leary, to whom I had an order for admission from Mr. Greenborn.

Wester Hilton seemed a pretty, little, old-fashioned town, as well as I could judge by the twilight, which, as we drove into the main street, was fast changing into darkness. My guide knew no more than I where the house was which was the place of my destination; all we knew was, that it was in the outskirts of the town, and, as most towns have outskirts all round them, this was too wide a direction to be practically useful. To meet the difficulty, I made him draw up as we were about passing a group of little boys, who were amusing themselves somewhat noisily about the town fountain, and, calling to the one I saw nearest, I asked whereabouts was Mr. Greenborn's house?

"Mr. Greenborn has two houses," was the urchin's reply.

"Yes; but I have a letter to a man named Leary, a caretaker; I want the house *he* has the care of."

"They are both in the care of Learys—Mat Leary takes care of one and Mick Leary of the other."

"Humph," said I, "my note is addressed 'M. Leary'; that may be either Mat or Mick; I don't know what to do."

"The gemman wants the house where the lady is, what makes a queer noise with her feet," said my guide, coming to my assistance in a very handsome manner.

"There are two ladies that make queer noises with their feet," was the baffling reply.

"The gemman wants to go to the house where the lady is what's dead, then," said the man, "and now you have it."

"And what does he want to do there?"

"He's a-going to spend the night there."

"That's rum, that is!—what's he going to do that for?"

"That's my business, my good boys," said I (for the whole party had collected about us during the colloquy); "all I request of you is, to be so obliging as to direct me to the house."

The boys whispered together, and I heard the word "Prime!" pronounced by several of them in tones of great approbation. Then the boys, one and all, vociferously proclaimed their readiness to act as my guides, and ran off in a troop, crying, "This way! this way!" the gig following at the cautious pace necessary in driving over the pavement of a town at

dusk. We passed through several streets, of various degrees of narrowness, and then came to a complicated knot of lanes, dark and steep, containing the habitations of the poorer people, and alive with children, who were snatching a brief hour's bliss among the puddles, before being called into bed. As my guides scoured along, whooping like wild Indians, stopping now and then at the corners to let the gig come up, they indulged in all sorts of tricks appropriate to the day—giving runaway knocks at hall-doors, whipping each other's caps off, and "shying" them in at open parlour windows, where quiet families were at tea; calling over half-doors into shops for penn'orths of all kinds of things that were never sold, and exclaiming, in the hearing of mothers who knew that their children were out, that a baby had just been run over by the gig, and was lying in two halves in the gutter! To any of their own order whom they met, and who demanded where they were going, they stated that there was a great conjuror come to town for the purpose of laying the ghost; that I was he, that the other chap (meaning the servant) was the devil, and that they (the boys) were showing us the way to the haunted house. This announcement (to which I perceived that something very short was added in a whisper) was always received with expressions of enthusiastic delight, and produced the immediate accession of all who heard it, to the ranks of my escort.

At length we were out of the lanes, which had gradually conducted us to a height overlooking the greater part of Wester Hilton, and where the breath

of the open country came upon us with a welcome freshness, after the close and dingy labryinth through which we had just passed. One large, dark-looking house stood here alone. "That's it ! there you are, sir ! that's your address !" burst from my conductors in chorus. I thanked them for their obliging services, and they stood huddled together in a watchful group, at some distance from the dreaded mansion, while the gig drove up to the foot of the broad steps that led to its door.

I will not say that there was absolutely nothing queer in my sensations as I alighted, and walked up the steps, through the interstices of which, as I felt rather than saw, a rank growth of grass had found way. Nor will I be positive that the prevailing tone of my mind was liveliness, as I looked up at the house, with the consciousness in my mind of what had brought me there. It was a tall, black-looking, silent building, with a wide area on each side of the door-steps, to look down into which, at this hour, was like looking into bottomless gulfs of darkness. It seemed as if that murky chasm cut off the house from the living world—as if he who ascended those steps crossed a bridge that carried him from the pleasant earth into he knew not what doleful region, from which there might be no return. Even the windows, through which no glimmer of light came to indicate that all the wide extent of the house was not abandoned to utter loneliness, seemed to survey me with a strange spectral look, as I stood still for a moment, when half-way up, and ran my eyes over the whole spacious front, in search of some token of

the presence of anything within, that yet belonged to the fellowship of the living.

"There are no such things as ghosts," said I, encouragingly, to myself; "let me not forget in what century I live; these are not the dark ages. The house looks dreary, but so all uninhabited houses do; I was prepared for that—it is quite natural, and so is the grass on the steps—nothing more so."

It was, nevertheless, with some tumult about the heart that I lifted the huge knocker (for everything there was huge), and knocked at the door. The sound of the knock itself had something hollow and sepulchral, I thought, and seemed to awaken a hundred dim echoes in the vast space of the empty rooms and passages, which spoke of solitude and desolation with a gloomy eloquence not calculated to raise my spirits. I felt as if I had rashly uttered a spell,—as if I had summoned a spirit,—and, if I must tell the truth, the hope I was at that moment most disposed to take to my heart was, that he would not come. I don't think I should have felt a whit mortified at the slight personal estimation in which such disregard of my summons might have implied that I was held in the other world.

After knocking, I waited a long time, but there was no answer; and the silence impressed me with such a sense of I knew not what, that I felt half inclined to get into the gig again, drive back to Bleaklawns, and say I had not been able to get into the house.

I did not do that—I knew Harry Fenwick; and, after waiting about five times as long as one generally

does, or as I would have done at any other door, I gave another knock. This time there was an answer. Heavy steps made themselves heard from within, not, as it seemed, in the hall, but in a room adjoining; then one of the windows overlooking the area was opened, and a gruff voice asked, "Who the devil was there?"

I said I had a note from Mr. Greenborn to the caretaker of the house; and if he, as I supposed, was that person, I would trouble him to come to the door.

Instead of doing this, he reached me a stick out of the window, and bid me "fix the letter in that." The end of the stick was split, and I placed the letter in it, marvelling, however, at the excessive reluctance the fellow showed to quit his solitude. I thought, if I were the inmate of such a dwelling, I should be glad at any time to come to the door, and hold a little converse with mortals yet in the body. But the man seemed to have got used to spiritual society, and had no wish to extend his acquaintance in an earthly direction. After a while, his steps were heard coming along the hall, then there was the moving of a chain, the drawing of bolts, the taking down (to judge by the sound) of a ponderous bar, and, lastly, the turning of the massive key, which grated in the lock as if it liked the work it was doing as little as he in whose hand it was held.

At last the door opened, grinding and growling on its hinges as if it had no more mind to be opened than the key and the porter had to open it: it did open, nevertheless, and the man of the window

appeared, with a candle in his hand. He was rather a savage-looking fellow, strongly built, and with something peculiarly hard and determined in his look. I recollected what Mr. Hammond had said of him, and could not but confess that, had there been such a thing as a ghost, he was, to all appearance, the very man to keep house with it.

"This is a curious thing," said he, in a tone that did not express much liking or respect for my person; "what's the meaning of it at all?"

"Does not the note tell you what you are to do?" said I.

"What's the meaning of it, I say," repeated he; "or what do you want in the place?"

"I am the bearer of a note to you," replied I, "from the gentleman in whose employment you are. If I am not mistaken, he directs you to suffer me to pass a night in the house alone. I must remark, my good fellow, that I am surprised—much surprised—at the reception you give me, coming to you with such authority."

"It's a devil of a curious thing!" said the man, soliloquizingly, and not appearing to have heard my last words—"it's a thing I don't know the meaning of, at all at all." Then eyeing me with great disfavour, and with a strong expression of suspicion in his features, he asked rudely, "And what do you want to pass a night in the house for?"

"I should think," answered I, "it may suffice you that Mr. Greenborn places me at liberty to do so: if he is satisfied, I presume you may be so!"

"I'm not satisfied, then," said the fellow, with an

oath. "This paper says, 'Let the bearer take your place for one night, or more if he wishes—but he won't. Place everything at his disposal, and make him as comfortable as you can. You can go to the other house for the night, or to the Greenborn Arms if you like it better. Signed, Valentine Greenborn." I say I'm not satisfied at all: I want no one to take my place."

"Why, what objection can you possibly have, when the gentleman who owns the house has none?" exclaimed I, more and more surprised at his demeanour.

"What objection, is it? Why wouldn't I have an objection? I'm to give you up my place for a night! And where would I be if you wouldn't give it back to me again in the morning?"

"Not give it back to you! Oh, upon that score, I assure you, you may be perfectly easy. One night is all I wish for. I am surprised you think I want to make a longer stay."

"But I do think it," persisted the man: "sure I see it plain enough"—and his voice grew hoarse with anger—"it's to supplant me is what you want to do."

"To supplant you!"

"Ay, to supplant me—to get the place. That's English, isn't it? You want to get the place. You'd take it a night on trial, and you'd take it to-morrow for good. And I'm to put everything at your disposal, and make you as comfortable as I can? The devil may make you comfortable (or warm, anyhow), and to him I pitch you."

I had never been treated with such rudeness in my

life, and I felt inexpressibly shocked : it mortified me, too, to be taken for a person of the class likely to come on the errand he supposed. Did I look like a servant out of place? I could not utter a word.

"Go away," continued the fellow; "you're losing you're time. They were looking for an April fool that sent you here. Go home with you, man. You're not fit for the place, I tell you. You haven't it in your eye. You have neither the constitution nor the courage for it. She'd frighten you out of your life in the first three days. She'd cow you, man alive, and then where would you be? Under her feet. And pretty feet they would be to be under."

I confess that a thrill ran through my heart at these words, they conveyed so direct an allusion to the club-footed lady. However, as soon as I could find utterance, I assured him that his suspicions were misplaced; that I had no ambition to supplant him in his place; that I was a person in his master's rank in life, and had a servant of my own in London, where I lived when I was at home. That I was at this time on a visit at Mr. Fenwick's, of Bleaklawns, in whose gig I had come, and whose servant was at that moment sitting in the said gig, with a basket for me, and would put up for the night at the Greenborn Arms, and come to fetch me in the morning. "He shall give you a set down," said I, "if you like; you can go in the gig anywhere you fix on, to spend the night. That will convince you. Look, there is *the gig* in the street; I am sure you must perceive, *now*, that I am a respectable person."

By degrees, conviction appeared to dawn on his

mind, and when I added the clinching argument of a guinea, that he might drink my health at the Green-born Arms, the last shadow of a doubt fled; I had paid my footing, and was free of the haunted house. Well, I ran down to the gig, and received the basket from the servant's hand. It occurred to me that the young man might like to share my adventure, and I made him the offer, which was "declined with thanks." I now entered the house, and found its internal aspect not such as to belie the external. A wide hall, wainscoted, and looking vaster than it was by the light of a single candle; a broad staircase, of a most forlorn aspect, with a massive wooden balustrade, that spoke of times when the old mansion was merrier; a long passage, along which the echoes of our own footsteps pursued us, and shot the thought into my brain, "What sort of footsteps shall I, perhaps, hear along this passage, when this man has left me alone in the house"; then another staircase—a back staircase, narrow, of stone, winding down into regions I could only guess at, and up to the second floor, to which we ascended by it; finally, a back-room on the second floor, into which my guide conducted me, and in which a fire was burning. This was the room, he said, he generally kept in, and he thought I should be more comfortable there than anywhere else; there was his bedroom adjoining, in case I should feel inclined to take a stretch in the course of the night.

After making some arrangements for my accommodation, the man was going to take leave, when I thought I should like first to have a few words of conversation with him about the ghost. I therefore

asked him, as he was about to quit the room, whether he ever *saw* the—the lady, in short, with the club-feet?

"Did he ever see her?" repeated the man, in surprise: to be sure he saw her, every night of his life.

"Every *night?*" said I. "Then she doesn't appear in the day-time?"

"Not often," was his reply.

"And, do you think it likely, may I ask, that *I* shall see her to-night?" inquired I, somewhat taken aback by finding the man give such an unequivocal testimony to the reality of the apparition.

"Will you see her to-night? To be sure you will," answered he, with a look of surprise. "What would hinder you?"

"Then she appears *every* night?" said I, hoping perhaps to hear that now and then, at however long intervals, a night passed without the visitation.

"Every night, as sure as the night comes."

"And," I hesitatingly asked, "are you not at all afraid of her?"

"Faith, I'm not," replied the fellow, with a hardened laugh. "It's little use I'd be here, if I was. It 's she, poor soul, that's afraid of me."

I was thunderstruck.

"And you must make her afraid of you too," he pursued, "or faith she'll make you afraid of her, sure enough; and if she sees that, you're a lost man. I see you're a gentleman that has no notion or understanding of these kind of things, and I can't think, at all at all, what made you come here. But I tell you,

you mustn't let her think you're afraid of her, or you're done for. It's *the eye* does it all; keep a steady eye, if you can, and you'll manage her easy. A child could manage them, if it would keep a steady eye."

"But, dear me," pleaded I, "surely if I am afraid, she will know it, in spite of any efforts I may make to keep from showing it in my countenance. Surely it is impossible to deceive such a being.

"It isn't easy," replied the man; "but it is isn't impossible all out. Still, I don't think *you'll* do it, and upon my soul, sir, I'm sorry to leave you in this house to-night. If I was a gentleman of your meek temper, I wouldn't be a night in this house for a thousand pounds. Good night, sir."

With these encouraging words he withdrew. I went to the door of the room, listened to his footsteps along the passage, down the winding stair, and then along the passage on the first floor. In the deep and echoing silence of the old house, I could catch the reverberations of his heavy tread, until he reached the hall below, and then I heard the huge house-door open and shut, and, a few moments after, the gig rumbled slowly away.

I now resolved to make myself as comfortable as circumstances would admit, and to think as little as possible of where I was, and for what purpose. It would be too much to say that my opinions on the subject of apparitions were changed; they rested on far too solid a substratum of argument to be easily shaken. Still, the positive way in which the care-taker had spoken of seeing the club-footed lady made me feel odd, the more from the very easy way in

which he had treated the matter, as if there were nothing at all in it to be wondered at. I could understand a fearful man's fancying that he saw ghosts, but this savage was not a bit afraid—nay, he boasted that the ghost was afraid of him. By what influence, then, could *his* imagination—a faculty seldom lively in people of his stamp—be worked up to the pitch necessary for such illusions? Did he, perhaps, drink? He looked not very unlike it. Yes; no doubt, he drank; that explained the mystery; the spirits by which he was haunted were not without but within him. A superstitious man—as all the lower orders, and especially the Irish, were—and living in a house reputed to be haunted—what could be more natural than that, when his senses were disordered by liquor, the confused impressions they gave him should assume the shapes with which the popular tradition taught him to believe himself surrounded, and that he should be ready to swear, when he came to himself again, that he had seen ghosts? Besides, habitual indulgence in intoxicating liquors produced a disposition to see spectres even when sober, and this man might, for anything I know, be the victim of a chronic *delirium tremens*. That would solve the riddle at once. I set it down, therefore, for a made-out thing, that Leary was a drinker, and felt considerable comforted in my mind by the establishment of the point.

Still more comforted did I feel after I had drawn a chair to the fire, thrown on a fresh shovelful of coals, unpacked my basket, drawn the cork of a bottle of Madeira, poured myself out a glass, tossed it off, poured out another, left that standing at my elbow,

and then, snuffing my candles, and taking the last *Maga* out of my pocket, threw myself back in my chair, and stretched out my legs for a luxurious read. The fire was good, the Madeira better, *Maga* the best of all; and I basked, and sipped, and read, till really a very great tranquillity began to steal over my spirit, my pulse beat again in full unison with the pulse of my century, and I felt that I was doing a very enlightened thing, and dealing a heavy blow and a great discouragement to all superstitious and dark-age ideas, by being where I was, and doing what I did. It is true that the silence of the great house would at times drag away my thoughts from the page before me, and lead them through the lonesome rooms and deserted passages which, I knew, were below, and above, and around me; and show them that drearily-echoing staircase again, and that hall, with its age-blackened panelling, which lay between me and the door that shut out all human life but my own; and remind them of the dark depth that seemed to insulate the house, and of that grass-grown bridge which it had vainly thrown across, to the world that repudiated it, to tempt men with warm blood in their veins into its woe-stricken solitude. But these feelings were momentary, and every glass of Madeira contributed to widen the intervals between them—to make them fewer and farther between. In short, I was getting on extremely well in the haunted house.

At last, what with the fire, and what with the wine, in spite of Anthony Poplar, I fell asleep. I dreamt I was at Bleaklawns, and giving the Fenwicks a triumphant account of my enterprise, and that a

deputation of the Wester Hiltonians, with the Mayor at its head, was come out to bring me the thanks and freedom of their town in a blue bandbox, when something, I don't know what, awaked me. For a moment I forgot where I was, but in a moment more I was fearfully reminded. Standing not three paces from me was a lady, whose face was white and still as death, and whose eyes gleamed with a peculiar vague brightness, staring at me in silence, and with an unchanging, stony expression, that made my own heart feel as if suddenly turned into stone. I knew it was the ghost. At first I tried to believe that I was still asleep, but could not accomplish it. Then I said, "It's the Madeira"; but I could not believe that rightly either. Then I looked down at the lady's feet—involuntarily, I must say; for I felt, the moment I had done it, that I had been guilty of a great breach of politeness. However, it was but a glance, and it was sufficient; there were the club-feet, sure enough.

How I felt, words cannot tell. Amazement and desperate fear were, I think, the uppermost sensations—I call them sensations, for I had them in my nerves, and in my blood, as well as in my mind. I did not for an instant indulge the hope of making the ghost think I was not afraid of her, much less of making her afraid of me. I was conscious that it was out of the question, that it would be madness to think of it; and Leary's words, "She'll cow you, and then where will you be?—*under her feet!*" recurred to my mind with a terrible distinctness. I looked at her feet again.

"That's twice you've looked at them," said the ghost; "you'd better not do it a third time."

The voice was as unearthly as her aspect—a strange, shrieking whisper, which sounded as if she drew in her breath when she spoke, instead of letting it out.

I was confounded: I tried to articulate something about not meaning any offence, but my voice stuck in my throat.

"Of course you are aware," said the lady, in the same tone, and after a short pause, "that I am the ghost of poor Miss Greenborn."

I was still voiceless; but, as she seemed to expect an answer, I bowed.

"There's a poor, foolish creature," proceeded she, "in Mr. Greenborn's other house, who fancies that *she* is the ghost. But she is not, for I am."

I bowed again.

"She's out of her wits," continued the apparition: "I frightened her out of them."

I must observe that the ghost's countenance never changed, let the subject she spoke of be what it might. It assumed no expression of passion—of pleasure or displeasure; but wore the same vague, troubled stare, that varied as little as if the features had been cast in marble.

"I have been expecting you long," resumed the spectre after another pause. "Indeed, ever since you died I knew that sooner or later you would find your way to me. You are come, and we will part no more."

"God bless my soul!" murmured I, my voice

beginning to return, but dying away again before I could say that I wasn't dead.

"No—in the world of which we are now denizens," she pursued, "there are no partings: they who meet in this world are united for ever."

She paused again, and added, "We will haunt this house together—we shall be very happy."

Making a great effort, I now, in faltering accents, assured the lady that she was under a mistake, that I was not a ghost, not dead, but a gentleman residing in London, who, being on a visit in this neighbourhood, and hearing of the extraordinary things said in connection with this house, had solicited and obtained Mr. Greenborn's permission to pass a night in it, for the satisfaction of a philosophical curiosity. I added, that I had never believed in ghosts before, but that this did not leave me a word to say.

"You are one of those unhappy spirits, I perceive," began the apparition, when I had done, "who are in the dark as to their own identity. There are many such among the departed. They who have been faithless to their vows while living are often punished by not knowing who they are when dead. This is your case. You have existed sixty years"—

"I beg your pardon," interrupted I; "I'm not forty yet."

"You were not forty when you died," said she; "but you have been sixty years dead, and these sixty years you have passed in a dream, believing yourself alive, believing yourself another person—a person who, if he be living at all, might be your grandson. It is time to undeceive you. You are he who broke

this faithful heart—this heart which, in the grave, still beats for you. You are he who won this heart, and then flung it from him, and left it to break in loneliness. And for what? For these feet!"

She put one forward as she spoke, and I felt as I looked at it, that the faithless gentleman had not been so very much to blame.

"Feet," she continued, "which in China would be considered particularly handsome! But you are come back, and the truant, lost and blighted, shall to this bosom be taken once more. All is forgotten. Are you," she added, "a good rider?"

"Pretty well," replied I, wondering what the drift of this question could be—"nothing very extraordinary."

"I am," said she, and will take you up behind me. We are but twelve miles from the Scottish border, and, on a black cat which I have below-stairs, we shall be there in three quarters of an hour."

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed I; "I never rode on a black cat in all my life!"

"If you'd rather have a broomstick, say so," replied the ghost; "there's one in the house."

"I declare," said I, "I don't think I should make it out much better on the one than the other."

"Then a horse," said the ghost; "there's a horse in the stable which belongs to the live man, Leary. He will be unquiet under ghosts, but we shall manage to sit him, notwithstanding."

"But what are we to go to the Scottish border for?" asked I, feeling a horrid anxiety taking possession of me.

"To be married," answered the ghost,

"Oh, dear!" cried I; "I must really say"—and I stopped.

"What?" said the ghost

"I am not the person you take me for," said I; "I am not, indeed; it's quite a mistake. I'm not dead—I never *was* dead in all my life; and I don't at all feel that I am the sort of man likely to make a ghost happy."

"Wait," said the ghost; "I perceive you are under an enchantment, and you will never know how you are till it is dissolved. Did you ever read the *White Cat?*"

I replied in the affirmative.

"Do you remember how the princess in the tale was disenchanted?"

"I think the prince cut off her head."

"He did; and you must be disenchanted in the same way. Just give me that knife you have in the basket there—will you?"

I protested strenuously against the proposed treatment. She then said perhaps a finger would do, or my nose; but I expressed an unchangeable determination to retain both.

"I have it," said she; "there's a live woman in the house, who is very much in my way. You shall cut off her head, and we will fancy it yours; it will come to the same thing."

"I wouldn't do such a thing for the world," cried I, excessively horrified; "wouldn't the black cat's head do?"

"Mention such a thing again," said the ghost,

"and see what will happen to you. No; I know another means. The live woman is a witch; she has a wand, by means of which she has often greatly tormented and controlled me. She is now asleep; I will go fetch her wand, and disenchant you with it."

She stumped gravely away, leaving me a prey to the most indescribable tumult of feelings. It occurred to me that the best thing I could do would be to start off before she came back; and putting on my hat and great coat, I proceeded to put my design into execution. Taking a candle in my hand, and hastily swallowing a couple of glasses of Madeira, I stole out of the room, and along the passage, reached the winding stair, hurried along the passage on the first floor, and was near the great staircase, when I met the ghost.

It was my own fault; if I had not stopped to drink those two glasses of Madeira, I should have been out of the house before she knew anything about it.

She held her right behind her back, and without expressing any surprise at meeting me, bid me take off my big coat. Of course I did not dare to disobey. She then directed me to take off my coat; this I also did. Upon this she showed the hand which she had held behind her back, and in which was a very neat riding-whip.

"Do you know what that is?" said the apparition.

"It's a horsewhip," said I, feeling very queer.

"No," replied she, "that's a wand; and I must conjure you with this wand until you are disenchanted, and know who you are."

Without another word, she rained a perfect deluge

of blows, with the cursed cutting-whip, upon my shoulders and arms. I made a run for the stairs, but she was before me, and turned me back, laying on all the while with an energy that I should never have given a disembodied spirit credit for. From time to time she asked if I was disenchanted yet, and if I still fancied myself to be alive; but I made no answer, partly because I could do nothing but shout with the pain, and partly because I saw plainly that there is no use in arguing with a ghost, especially when it happens, besides, to be the ghost of a woman.

At last, making a fortunate plunge, I got at the stairs, and ran down. It was a happy circumstance for me that the ghost had club-feet, for it prevented her running quick enough to come up with me before I reached the door; and, although I did get a cut or two more while I was opening it, I scarcely felt them for the joy of being so nearly out of her clutches; nor did it in the least diminish the satisfaction with which I sprang down the steps that bridged the yawning area, to reflect that I had paid with my coat and hat for the curiosity which had led me to spend a night in a haunted house.

I went to the Greenborn Arms for that night, and set off next morning for London, having left a note for Harry Fenwick at Hilton, to say that I gave up the nineteenth century.

Yet I don't know how it is—I sometimes suspect those little rascally boys made an April fool of me, and brought me to the wrong house.

THE BURIAL OF O'GRADY.*

By Samuel Lover.

The workshops of Neck-or-Nothing Hall rang with the sounds of occupation for two days after the demise of its former master. The hoarse grating sound of the saw, the whistling of the plane, and the stroke of the mallet, denoted the presence of the carpenter; and the sharper clink of a hammer, told of old Fogy the family "milliner" being at work;—but it was not on millinery Fogy was now employed, though neither was it legitimate tinker's work. He was scrolling out with his shears, and beating into form, a plate of tin to serve for the shield on O'Grady's coffin, which was to record his name, age, and day of departure; and this was the second plate on which the old man worked, for one was already finished in the corner. Why are there two coffin-plates? Enter the carpenter's shop, and you will see the answer in two coffins the carpenter has nearly completed. But why two coffins for one death? Listen, reader, to a bit of Irish strategy.

It has been stated that an apprehension was entertained of a seizure of the inanimate body of O'Grady for the debts it had contracted in life, and the harpy nature of the money-lender, from whom this movement was dreaded, warranted the fear. Had O'Grady

* From *Handy Andy*.

been popular, such a measure on the part of a cruel creditor might have been defied, as the surrounding peasantry would have risen *en masse* to prevent it; but the hostile position in which he had placed himself towards the people, alienated the natural affection they are born with for their chiefs, and any partial defence the few fierce retainers whom individual interest had attached to him could have made, might have been insufficient; therefore, to save his father's remains from the pollution (as the son considered) of a bailiff's touch, Gustavus determined to achieve by stratagem what he could not accomplish by force, and had two coffins constructed, the one to be filled with stones and straw, and sent out by the front entrance, with all the demonstration of a real funeral, and be given up to the attack it was feared would be made upon it; while the other, put to its legitimate use, should be placed on a raft, and floated down the river to an ancient burial-ground, which lay some miles below on the opposite bank. A facility for this was offered by a branch of the river running up into the domain, as it will be remembered; and the scene of the bearish freaks played upon Furlong was to witness a trick of a more serious nature.

While all these preparations were going forward, the "waking" was kept up in all the barbarous style of old times,—eating and drinking in profusion went on in the house, and the kitchen of the hall rang with joviality. The feats of sports and arms of the man who had passed away were lauded, and his comparative achievements with those of his progenitors gave rise to many a stirring anecdote; and bursts of

barbarous exultation or more barbarous merriment rang in the house of death. There was no lack of whisky to fire the brains of these revellers, for the standard of the measurement of family grandeur was, too often, a liquid one in Ireland, even so recently as the time we speak of; and the dozens of wine wasted during the life it helped to shorten, and the posthumous gallons consumed in toasting to the memory of the departed, were among the cherished remembrances of hereditary honour. "There were two hogsheads of whisky drank at my father's wake!" would have been but a moderate boast of a true Irish squire, fifty years ago.

And now the last night of the wake approached, and the retainers thronged to honour the obsequies of their departed chief with an increased enthusiasm, which rose in proportion as the whisky got low; and songs in praise of their present occupation (that is, getting drunk) rang merrily round, and the sports of the field, and the sorrows and joys of love resounded; in short, the ruling passions of life figured in rhyme and music in honour of this occasion of death; and as death is the maker of widows, a very animated discussion on the subject of widowhood arose, which afforded great scope for the rustic wits, and was crowned by the song of "Widow Machree" being universally called for by the company; and a fine-looking fellow, with a merry eye and large white teeth, which he amply displayed by a wide mouth, poured forth in cheery tones a pretty lively air, which suited well the humorous spirit of the words of the song.

The singer was honoured with a round of applause, and his challenge for another lay was readily answered, and mirth and music filled the night, and ushered in the dawn of the day which was to witness the melancholy sight of the master of an ample mansion being made the tenant of the "narrow house."

In the evening of that day, however, the wail rose loud and long; the mirth which "the waking" permits had passed away, and the *ulican*, or funeral cry, told that the lifeless chief was being borne from his hall. That wild cry was heard even by the party who were waiting to make their horrid seizure, and for *that* party, the stone-laden coffin was sent with a retinue of mourners through the old iron gate of the principal entrance, while the mortal remains were borne by a smaller party to the river inlet, and placed on the raft. Half an hour had witnessed a sham fight on the part of O'Grady's people with the bailiffs and their followers, who made the seizure they intended, and locked up their prize in an old barn to which it had been conveyed, until some engagement on the part of the heir should liberate it; while the aforesaid heir, as soon as the shadows of evening had shrouded the river in obscurity, conveyed the remains, which the myrmidons of the law fancied they possessed, to its quiet and lonely resting-place. The raft was taken in tow by a boat carrying two of the boys, and pulled by four lusty retainers of the departed chief; while Gustavus himself stood on the raft, astride above the coffin, and with an eel spear, which had afforded him many a day's sport, performed the melancholy task of guiding it. It was a strangely

painful yet beautiful sight, to behold the graceful figure of the fine boy engaged in this last sad duty: with dexterous energy he plied his spear, now on this side and now on that, directing the course of the raft, or clearing it from the flaggers which interrupted its passage through the narrow inlet. This duty he had to attend to for some time, even after leaving the little inlet, for the river was much overgrown with flaggers at this point, and the increasing darkness made the task more difficult.

In the midst of all this action not one word was spoken; even the sturdy boatmen were mute, and the fall of the oar in the rowlock, the plash of the water, and the crushing sound of the yielding rushes, as the "watery bier" made its way through them, were the only sounds which broke the silence. Still Gustavus betrayed no emotion; but by the time they reached the open stream, and that his personal exertion was no longer required, a change came over him. It was night,—the measured beat of the oars sounded like a knell to him,—there was darkness above him, and death below, and he sank down upon the coffin, and, plunging his face passionately between his hands, he wept bitterly.

Sad were the thoughts that oppressed the brain and wrung the heart of the high-spirited boy. He felt that his dead father was *escaping*, as it were, to the grave,—that even death did not terminate the consequences of an ill-spent life. He felt like a thief in the night, even in the execution of his own stratagem, and the bitter thoughts of that sad and solemn time wrought a potent spell over after years,—that one

hour of misery and disgrace influenced the entire of a future life.

On a small hill overhanging the river was the ruin of an ancient early temple of Christianity, and to its surrounding burial-ground a few of the retainers had been despatched to prepare a grave. They were engaged in this task by the light of a torch made of bog pine, when the flicker of the flame attracted the eye of a horseman who was riding slowly along the neighbouring road. Wondering what could be the cause of light in such a place, he leaped the adjoining fence, and rode up to the graveyard.

"What are you doing here?" he said to the labourers. They paused and looked up, and the flash of the torch fell upon the features of Edward O'Connor.

"We're finishing your work!" said one of the men, with malicious earnestness.

"My work?" repeated Edward.

"Yis," returned the man, more sternly than before, —"this is the grave of O'Grady."

The words went like an ice-bolt through Edward's heart; and even by the torchlight the tormentor could see his victim grew livid.

The fellow who wounded so deeply one so generally beloved as Edward O'Connor was a thorough ruffian. His answer to Edward's query sprang not from love of O'Grady, nor abhorrence of taking human life, but from the opportunity of retort which the occasion offered upon one who had once checked him in an act of brutality.

Yet Edward O'Connor could not reply,—it was a

home-thurst. The death of O'Grady had weighed heavily upon him; for though O'Grady's wound had been given in honourable combat, provoked by his own fury, and not producing immediate death; though that death had supervened upon the subsequent intractability of the patient; yet the fact that O'Grady had never been "up and doing" since the duel, tended to give the impression that his wound was the remote if not the immediate cause of his death, and this circumstance weighed heavily on Edward's spirits. His friends told him he felt overkeenly on the subject, and that no one but himself could entertain a question of *his* total innocence of O'Grady's death; but when from the lips of a common peasant he got the answer he did, and *that* beside the grave of his adversary, it will not be wondered at that he reeled in his saddle. A cold shivering sickness came over him, and to avoid falling he alighted, and leaned for support against his horse, which stooped, when freed from the restraint of the rein, to browse on the rank verdure; and for the moment Edward envied the unconsciousness of the animal against which he leaned. He pressed his forehead against the saddle, and from the depth of a bleeding heart came up the agonized exclamation of "O God! O God!"

A gentle hand was laid on his shoulder as he spoke, and turning round, he beheld Mr. Bermingham.

"What brings you here?" said the clergyman.

"Accident," answered Edward. "But why should I say accident? It is by a higher authority and a

better—it is the will of Heaven. It is meant as a bitter lesson to human pride: we make for ourselves laws of *honour*, and forget the laws of God!"

"Be calm, my young friend," said the worthy pastor. "I cannot wonder you feel deeply,—but command yourself." He pressed Edward's hand as he spoke, and left him, for he knew that an agony so keen is not benefited by companionship.

Mr. Bermingham was there by appointment to perform the burial service, and he had not left Edward's side many minutes when a long, wild whistle from the waters announced the arrival of the boat and raft, and the retainers ran down to the river, leaving the pine-torch stuck in the upturned earth, waving its warm blaze over the cold grave. During the interval which ensued between the departure of the men and their reappearance, bearing the body to its last resting place, Mr. Bermingham spoke with Edward O'Connor, and soothed him into a more tranquil bearing. When the coffin came within view, he advanced to meet it, and began the sublime burial-service, which he repeated most impressively.

When it was over, the men commenced filling up the grave.

As the clods fell heavily upon the coffin, they smote the hearts of the dead man's children; yet the boys stood upon the verge of the grave as long as a vestige of the tenement of their lost father could be seen; but as soon as the coffin was hidden, they withdrew from the brink, and the younger boys, each taking hold of the hand of the eldest, seemed to imply the need of

mutual dependence,—as if death had drawn closer the bond of brotherhood.

There was no sincerer mourner at that place than Edward O'Connor, who stood aloof, in respect for the feelings of the children of the departed man, till the grave was quite filled up, and all were about to leave the spot; but then his feelings overmastered him, and, impelled by a torrent of contending emotions, he rushed forward, and throwing himself on his knees before Gustavus, he held up his hands imploringly, and sobbed forth, "Forgive me!"

The astonished boy drew back.

"Oh, forgive me!" repeated Edward,—"I could not help it—it was forced on me—it was"—

As he struggled for utterance, even the rough retainers were touched, and one of them exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. O'Connor, it was a fair fight!"

"There!" exclaimed Edward,—"you hear it!—Oh, give me your hand in forgiveness!"

"I forgive you," said the boy, "but do not ask me to give you my hand to-night."

"You are right," said Edward, springing to his feet,—"you are right,—you are a noble fellow; and now, remember, Gustavus, by the side of your father's grave, I pledge you my soul, that through life and till death, in all extremity, Edward O'Connor is your sworn and trusty friend."

While the foregoing scene of sadness took place in the lone churchyard, unholy watch was kept over the second coffin by the myrmidons of the law. The usurer who made the seizure had brought down from Dublin three of the most determined bailiffs from

amongst the tribe, and to their care was committed the keeping of the supposed body in the old barn. Associated with these worthies were a couple of ill-conditioned country blackguards, who, for the sake of a bottle of whisky, would keep company with Old Nick himself, and who expected, moreover, to hear "a power o' news" from the "gentlemen" from Dublin, who in their turn did not object to have their guard strengthened, as their notions of a rescue in the country parts of Ireland were anything but agreeable. The night was cold, so, clearing away the sheaves of corn, with which the barn was stored, from one of its extremities, they made a turf fire, and stretched themselves on a good shake-down of straw before the cheering blaze, and circulated among them a bottle of whisky, of which they had good store. A tap at the door announced a new comer; but the Dublin bailiffs, fearing a surprise, hesitated to open to the knock, until their country allies assured them it was a friend, whose voice they recognised. The door was opened, and in walked Larry Hogan, to pick up his share of what was going, whatever it might be.

A repast was now made, more resembling a feast of savages round their war-fire, than any civilised meal; slices of bacon broiled in the fire, and eggs roasted in the turf-ashes. The viands were not objectionable; but the cooking!—oh!—there was neither gridiron nor frying-pan, fork nor spoon; a couple of clasp-knives served the whole party. Nevertheless, they satisfied their hunger, and then sent the bottle on its exhilarating round. Soon after that many a story of burglary, robbery, swindling,

petty larceny, and every conceivable crime was related for the amusement of the circle; and the plots and counter-plots of thieves and thief-takers raised the wonder of the peasants.

Larry Hogan was especially delighted: more particularly when some trick of either villainy or cunning came out.

From robbings they went on to tell of murders, and at last that uncomfortable sensation which people experience after a feast of horrors began to pervade the party; and whenever they looked round, there was the coffin in the background.

"Throw some turf on the fire," said Goggins, "'tis burning low, and change the subject; the tragic muse has reigned sufficiently long—enough of the dagger and the bowl—sink the socks, and put on the buck-skins. Leather away, Jim—sing us a song."

Jim cleared his throat and sang "The Quaker's Meeting," which tells how Jimmy Barlow, a highwayman dressed in girl's clothes, was outwitted by a Quaker.

"Well, it's a quare thing you should be singin' a song here," said Larry Hogan, "about Jim Barlow, and it's not over half a mile out o' this very place he was hanged."

"Indeed!" exclaimed all the men at once, looking with great interest at Larry.

"It's truth I'm telling you. He made a very bowld robbery up by the long hill there, on two gentlemin, for he was mighty stout."

"Pluck to the backbone," said Goggins.

"Well, he tuk the purses aff both o' them; and

just as he was goin' on afther doin' that same, what should appear on the road before him, but two other thravellers coming up forninst him. With that the men that was robbed cried out 'Stop thief!' and so Jim, seein' himself hemmed in betune the four o' them, faced his horse to the ditch, and took across the counthry; but the thravellers was well mounted as well as himself, and powdhered afther him like mad. Well, it was equal to a steeplechase a'most; and Jim, seein' he could not shake them off, thought the best thing he could do was to cut out some troublesome work for them; so he led off where he knew there was the devil's own leap to take, and he intended to 'pound * them there, and be off in the mane time; but as ill luck would have it, his own horse, that was as bowld as himself, and would jump at the moon if he was faced to it, missed his foot in takin' off, and fell short o' the leap and slipped his shouldher, and Jim himself had a bad fall of it too, and, av coorse, it was all over wid him—and up came the four gintlemen. Well, Jim had his pistols yet, and he pulled them out, and swore he'd shoot the first man that attempted to take him; but the gintlemen had pistols as well as he, and were so hot on the chase they determined to have him, and closed on him. Jim fired and killed one o' them; but he got a ball in the shouldher himself from another, and he was taken. Jim sthruv to shoot himself with his second pistol, but it missed fire. 'The curse o' the road is on me,' said Jim; 'my pistol missed fire, and

* Impound.

my horse slipped his shouldher, and now I'll be scragged,' says he, 'but it's not for nothing—I've killed one o' ye,' says he."

"He was all pluck," said Goggins.

"Desperate bowld," said Larry. "Well, he was thried and condimned, *av coorse;* and was hanged, as I tell you, half a mile out o' this very place where we are sittin'; and his appearance walks, they say, ever since."

"You don't say so!" said Goggins.

"Faith, it's thrue!" answered Larry.

"You never saw it," said Goggins.

"The Lord forbid!" returned Larry; "but it's thrue, for all that. For you see the big house near this barn, that is all in ruin, was desarted because Jim's ghost used to walk."

"That was foolish," said Goggins; "stir up the fire, Jim, and hand me the whisky."

"Oh, if it was only walkin', they might have got over that; but at last, one night, as the story goes, when there was a thremendious storm o' wind and rain"—

"Whisht!" said one of the peasants, "what's that?"

As they listened they heard the beating of heavy rain against the door, and the wind howled through its chinks.

"Well," said Goggins, "what are you stopping for?"

"Oh, I'm not stoppin'," said Larry; "I was ayin' that it was a bad wild night, and Jimmy Barlow's appearance came into the house, and asked

them for a glass o' sper'ts, and that he'd be obleeged to them if they'd help him with his horse that slipped his shouldher; and, faith, afther *that* they'd stay in the place no longer; and, signs on it, the house is gone to rack and ruin, and it's only this barn that is kept up at all, because it's convaynient for owld Skinflint on the farm."

"That's all nonsense," said Goggins, who wished, nevertheless, that he had not heard the "nonsense." "Come, sing another song, Jim."

Jim said he did not remember one.

"Then you sing, Ralph."

Ralph said every one knew he never did more than join a chorus.

"Then join me in a chorus," said Goggins, "for I'll sing, if Jim's afraid."

"I'm not afraid," said Jim.

"Then why won't you sing?"

"Because I don't like."

"Ah!" exclaimed Goggins.

"Well, maybe you're afraid yourself," said Jim, "if you told truth."

"Just to show you how little I'm afraid," said Goggins, with a swaggering air, "I'll sing another song about Jimmy Barlow."

"You'd better not," said Larry Hogan; "let him rest in pace!"

"Fudge!" said Goggins. "Will you join chorus, Jim?"

"I will," said Jim, fiercely.

"We'll all join," said the men (except Larry), who felt it would be a sort of relief to bully away

the supernatural terror which hung round their hearts after the ghost story, by the sound of their own voices.

"Then here goes!" said Goggins, who started another long ballad about Jimmy Barlow, in the opening of which all joined. It ran as follows:—

"My name it is Jimmy Barlow,
I was born in the town of Carlow,
And here I lie in Maryborough jail,
All for the robbing of the Wicklow mail.
Fol de rol de riddle-i-do!"

As it would be tiresome to follow this ballad through all its length, breadth, and thickness, we shall leave the singers engaged in their chorus, while we call the reader's attention to a more interesting person than Mister Goggins or Jimmy Barlow.

When Edward O'Connor had hurried from the burial-place, he threw himself into his saddle, and urged his horse to speed, anxious to fly the spot where his feelings had been so harrowed; and as he swept along through the cold night wind which began to rise in gusty fits, and howled past him, there was, in the violence of his rapid motion, something congenial to the fierce career of painful thoughts which chased each other through his heated brain. He continued to travel at this rapid pace, so absorbed in bitter reflection as to be quite insensible to external impressions, and he knew not how far nor how fast he was going, though the heavy breathing of his horse at any other time would have been signal sufficient to draw the rein; but still he pressed onward, and still the storm increased, and each

acclivity was topped but to sweep down the succeeding slope at the same desperate pace. Hitherto the road over which he pursued his fleet career lay through an open country, and though the shades of a stormy night hung above it, the horse could make his way in safety through the gloom ; but now they approached an old road which skirted an ancient domain, whose venerable trees threw their arms across the old causeway, and added their shadows to the darkness of the night.

Many and many a time had Edward ridden in the soft summer under the green shade of these very trees, in company with Fanny Dawson, his guiltless heart full of hope and love ;—perhaps it was this very thought crossing his mind at the moment which made his present circumstances the more oppressive. He was guiltless no longer,—he rode not in happiness with the woman he adored under the soft shade of summer trees, but heard the wintry wind howl through their leafless boughs as he hurried in maddened speed beneath them, and heard in the dismal sound but an echo of the voice of remorse which was ringing through his heart. The darkness was intense from the canopy of old oaks which overhung the road, but still the horse was urged through the dark ravine at speed, though one might not see an arm's length before them. Fearlessly it was performed, though ever and anon, as the trees swung about their heavy branches in the storm, smaller portions of the boughs were snapped off and flung in the faces of the horse and the rider, who still spurred and plashed his headlong way through the heavy road beneath.

Emerging at length from the deep and overshadowed valley, a steep hill raised its crest in advance, but still up the stony acclivity the feet of the mettled steed rattled rapidly, and flashed fire from the flinty path. As they approached the top of the hill the force of the storm became more apparent, and on reaching its crest, the fierce pelting of the mingled rain and hail made the horse impatient of the storm of which his rider was heedless,—almost unconscious. The spent animal with short snortings betokened his labour, and shook his head passionately as the fierce hail shower struck him in the eyes and nostrils. Still, however, was he urged downward, but he was no longer safe. Quite blown, and pressed over a rough descent, the generous creature, that would die rather than refuse, made a false step, and came heavily to the ground. Edward was stunned by the fall, though not seriously hurt; and, after the lapse of a few seconds, recovered his feet, but found the horse still prostrate. Taking the animal by the head, he assisted him to rise, which he was not enabled to do till after several efforts; and when he regained his legs, it was manifest he was seriously lamed; and as he limped along with difficulty beside his master, who led him gently, it became evident that it was beyond the animal's power to reach his own stable that night. Edward for the first time was now aware of how much he had punished his horse; he felt ashamed of using the noble brute with such severity, and became conscious that he had been acting under something little short of frenzy. The consciousness at once tended to restore him somewhat

to himself, and he began to look around on every side in search of some house where he could find rest and shelter for his disabled horse. As he proceeded thus, the care necessarily bestowed on his dumb companion partially called off his thoughts from the painful theme with which they had been exclusively occupied, and the effect was most beneficial. The first violent burst of feeling was past, and a calmer train of thought succeeded; he for the first time remembered the boy had forgiven him,—and that was a great consolation to him: he recalled, too, his own words, pledging to Gustavus his friendship, and in this pleasing hope of the future he saw much to redeem what he regretted of the past. Still, however, the wild flare of the pine-torch over the lone grave of his adversary, and the horrid answer of the grave-digger, that he was but "finishing *his* work," would recur to his memory, and awake an internal groan.

From this painful reminiscence he sought to escape, by looking forward to all he would do for Gustavus, and had become much calmer, when the glimmer of a light not far ahead attracted him, and he soon was enabled to perceive it proceeded from some buildings that lay on his right, not far from the road. He turned up the rough path which formed the approach, and the light escaped through the chinks of a large door, which indicated the place to be a coach-house, or some such office, belonging to the general pile, which seemed in a ruinous condition.

As he approached, Edward heard rude sounds of merriment, amongst which the joining of many

voices, in a "ree-raw" chorus, indicated that a carouse was going forward within.

On reaching the door, he could perceive through a wide chink a group of men sitting round a turf fire, which was piled at the far end of the building, which had no fire-place, and the smoke, curling upwards to the roof, wreathed the rafters in smoke; beneath this vapoury canopy the party sat drinking and singing, and Edward, ere he knocked for admittance, listened to the following strange refrain:—

"For my name it is Jimmy Barlow,
I was born in the town of Carlow,
And here I lie in Maryborough jail,
All for the robbing of the Wicklow mail.
Fol de rol de riddle-iddle-ido!"

Then the principal singer took up the song, which seemed to be one of robbery, blood, and murder, for it ran thus:—

"Then he cocked his pistol gaily,
And stood before him bravely,
Smoke and fire is my desire,
So blaze away, my game-cock squire.
For my name it is Jimmy Barlow
I was born, etc."

Edward O'Connor knocked at the door loudly; the words he had just heard about "pistols," "blazing away," and, last of all, "*squire*," fell gratingly on his ear at that moment, and seemed strangely to connect themselves with the previous adventures of the night and his own sad thoughts, and he beat against the door with violence.

The chorus ceased.

Edward repeated his knocking.

Still there was no answer; but he heard low and hurried muttering inside. Determined, however, to gain admittance, Edward laid hold of an iron hasp outside the door, which enabled him to shake the gate with violence, that there might be no excuse on the part of the inmates that they did not hear; but in thus making the old door rattle in its frame, it suddenly yielded to his touch, and creaked open on its rusty hinges; for when Larry Hogan had entered it had been forgotten to be barred.

As Edward stood in the open doorway, the first object which met his eye was the coffin,—and it is impossible to say how much at that moment the sight shocked him; he shuddered involuntarily, yet could not withdraw his eyes from the revolting object; and the pallor with which his previous mental anxiety had invested his cheek increased as he looked on this last tenement of mortality. "Am I to see nothing but the evidences of death's doings this night?" was the mental question which shot through Edward's overwrought brain, and he grew livid at the thought. He looked more like one raised from the grave than a living being, and a wild glare in his eyes rendered his appearance still more unearthly. He felt that shame which men always experience in allowing their feelings to overcome them; and by a great effort he mastered his emotion and spoke, but the voice partook of the strong nervous excitement under which he laboured, and was hollow and broken, and seemed more like that which one might fancy to proceed from the jaws of a sepulchre, than one of flesh and blood. Beaten by the storm, too, his hair hung in wet flakes

over his face, and added to his wild appearance, so that the men all jumped to their feet the first glimpse they caught of him, and huddled themselves together in the farthest corner of the building, from whence they eyed him with evident alarm.

Edward thought some whisky might check the feeling of faintness which overcame him; and though he deemed it probable he had broken in upon the nocturnal revel of desperate and lawless men, he nevertheless asked them to give him some; but instead of displaying that alacrity so universal in Ireland, of sharing the "creature" with a new-comer, the men only pointed to the bottle which stood beside the fire, and drew closer together.

Edward's desire for the stimulant was so great, that he scarcely noticed the singular want of courtesy on the part of the men; and seizing the bottle (for there was no glass), he put it to his lips, and quaffed a hearty dram of the spirit before he spoke.

"I must ask for shelter and assistance here," said Edward. "My horse, I fear, has slipped his shoulder"--

Before he could utter another word, a simultaneous roar of terror bust from the group—they fancied the ghost of Jimmy Barlow was before them, and made a simultaneous rush from the barn; and as they saw the horse at the door, another yell escaped them, as they fled with increased speed and terror. Edward stood in amazement as the men rushed from his presence. He followed to the gate to recall them; they were gone; he could only hear their yells in the distance. The circumstance seemed quite unaccount-

able ; and as he stood lost in vain surmises as to the cause of the strange occurrence, a low neigh of recognition from the horse reminded him of the animal's wants, and he led him into the barn, where, from the plenty of straw which lay around, he shook down a litter where the maimed animal might rest.

He then paced up and down the barn, lost in wonder at the conduct of those whom he found there, and whom his presence had so suddenly expelled ; and ever as he walked towards the fire, the coffin caught his eye. As a fitful blaze occasionally arose, it flashed upon the plate, which brightly reflected the flame, and Edward was irresistably drawn, despite his original impression of horror at the object, to approach and read the inscription. The shield bore the name of "O'Grady," and Edward recoiled from the coffin with a shudder, and inwardly asked, was he in his waking senses? He had but an hour ago seen his adversary laid in his grave, yet here was his coffin again before him, as if to harrow up his soul anew. Was it real, or a mockery? Was he the sport of a dream, or was there some dreadful curse fallen upon him, that he should be for ever haunted by the victim of his arm, and the call of vengeance for blood be ever upon his track? He breathed short and hard, and the smoky atmosphere in which he was enveloped rendered respiration still more difficult. As through this oppressive vapour, which seemed only fit for the nether world, he saw the coffin-plate flash back the flame, his imagination accumulated horror on horror ; and when the blaze sank, and but the bright red of the fire was reflected, it seemed to

him to burn, as it were, with a spot of blood, and he could support the scene no longer, but rushed from the barn in a state of mind bordering on frenzy.

It was about an hour afterwards, near midnight, that the old barn was in flames ; most likely some of the straw near the fire, in the confusion of the breaking up of the party, had been scattered within range of ignition, and caused the accident. The flames were seen for miles round the country ; and the shattered walls of the ruined mansion-house were illuminated brightly by the glare of the consuming barn, which in the morning added its own blackened and reeking ruin to the desolation, and crowds of persons congregated to the spot for many days after. The charred planks of the coffin were dragged from amongst the ruin ; and as the roof in falling in had dragged a large portion of the wall along with it, the stones which had filled the coffin could not be distinguished from those of the fallen building, therefore much wonder arose that no vestige of the bones of the corpse it was supposed to contain could be discovered. Wonder increased to horror as the strange fact was promulgated ; and in the ready credulity of a superstitious people, the terrible belief became general, that his sable majesty had made off with O'Grady and the party watching him ; for as the Dublin bailiffs never stopped till they got back to town, and were never seen again in the country, it was most natural to suppose that the devil had made a haul of *them* at the same time. In a few days, rumour added the spectral appearance of Jim Barlow to the tale, which only deepened its mysterious

horror; and, though after some time, the true story was promulgated by those who knew the real state of the case, yet the truth never gained ground, and was considered but a clever sham, attempted by the family to prevent so dreadful a story from attaching to their house; and tradition perpetuates to this hour the belief that *the devil flew away with O'Grady.*

Lone and shunned as the hill was where the ruined house stood, it became more lone and shunned than ever; and the boldest heart in the whole country-side would quail to be in its vicinity, even in the day-time. To such a pitch the panic rose, that an extensive farm which encircled it, and belonged to the old usurer who made the seizure, fell into a profitless state, from the impossibility of men being found to work upon it. It was useless even as pasture, for no one could be found to herd cattle upon it; altogether, it was a serious loss to the money grubber; and so far the incident of the burnt barn, and the tradition it gave rise to, acted beneficially, in making the inhuman act of warring with the dead recoil upon the merciless old usurer.

THE LIANHAN SHEE.

By Will. Carlton.

One summer evening Mary Sullivan was sitting at her own well-swept hearthstone, knitting feet to a pair of sheep's-grey stockings for Bartley, her husband. It was one of those serene evenings in the month of June, when the decline of day assumes a calmness and repose, resembling what we might suppose to have irradiated Eden, when our first parents sat in it before their fall. The beams of the sun shone through the windows in clear shafts of amber light, exhibiting millions of those atoms which float to the naked eye within its mild radiance. The dog lay barking in his dream at her feet, and the grey cat sat purring placidly upon his back, from which even his occasional agitation did not dislodge her.

Mrs. Sullivan was the wife of a wealthy farmer, and niece to the Rev. Felix O'Rourke; her kitchen was consequently large, comfortable, and warm. Over where she sat, jutted out the "brace" well lined with bacon; to the right hung a well-scoured salt-box, and to the left was the jamb, with its little Gothic paneless window to admit the light. Within it hung several ash rungs, seasoning for flail-sooples, or boulteens, a dozen of eel-skins, and several stripes of horse-skin, as hangings for them. The dresser was a "parfit white," and well furnished with the usual appurte-

nances. Over the door and on the "threshel," were nailed, "for luck," two horse-shoes, that had been found by accident. In a little "hole" in the wall, beneath the salt-box, lay a bottle of holy water to keep the place purified; and against the copestone of the gable, on the outside, grew a large lump of house-leek, as a specific for sore eyes and other maladies.

In the corner of the garden were a few stalks of tansy "to kill the thievin' worms in the childhre, the crathurs," together with a little Rosenoble, Solomon's Seal, and Bugloss, each for some medicinal purpose. The "lime wather" Mrs. Sullivan could make herself, and the "bog bane" for the *linh roe*, or heart-burn, grew in their own meadow-drain; so that, in fact, she had within her reach a very decent pharmacopœia, perhaps as harmless as that of the profession itself. Lying on the top of the salt-box was a bunch of fairy flax, and sewed in the folds of her own scapular was the dust of what had once been a four-leaved shamrock, an invaluable specific "for seein' the good people," if they happened to come within the bounds of vision. Over the door in the inside, over the beds, and over the cattle in the outhouses, were placed branches of withered palm, that had been consecrated by the priest on Palm Sunday; and when the cows happened to calve, this good woman tied, with her own hands, a woollen thread about their tails, to prevent them from being overlooked by evil eyes, or *elf-shot* by the fairies, who seem to possess a peculiar power over females of every species during the period of parturition. It is unnecessary to mention the variety of charms which she possessed

for that obsolete malady the colic, for toothache, headaches, or for removing warts, and taking motes out of the eyes; let it suffice to inform our readers that she was well stocked with them; and that in addition to this, she, together with her husband, drank a potion made up and administered by an herb-doctor, for preventing for ever the slightest misunderstanding or quarrel between man and wife. Whether it produced this desirable object or not our readers may conjecture, when we add, that the herb-doctor, after having taken a very liberal advantage of their generosity, was immediately compelled to disappear from the neighbourhood, in order to avoid meeting with Bartley, who had a sharp look-out for him, not exactly on his own account, but "in regard," he said, "that it had no effect upon *Mary*, at all at all"; whilst Mary, on the other hand, admitted its efficacy upon herself, but maintained, "that *Bartley* was worse nor ever afther it."

Such was Mary Sullivan, as she sat at her own hearth, quite alone, engaged as we have represented her. What she may have been meditating on we cannot pretend to ascertain; but after some time, she looked sharply into the "backstone," or hob, with an air of anxiety and alarm. By and by she suspended her knitting, and listened with much earnestness, leaning her right ear over to the hob, from whence the sounds to which she paid such deep attention proceeded. At length she crossed herself devoutly, and exclaimed, "Queen of saints about us! —is it back ye are? Well sure there's no use in talkin' bekase they say you know what's said of you,

or to you—an' we may as well spake yez fair. Hem—musha yez are welcome back, crickets, avourneenee! I hope that, not like the last visit ye ped us, yez are comin' for luck now! Moolyeen died, any way, soon afther your other *kailyee*, ye crathurs ye. Here's the bread, an' the salt, an' the male for yez, an' we wish ye well. Eh?—saints above, if it isn't listenin' they are jist like a Christhien! Wurrah, but ye are the wise an' the quare crathurs all out!"

She then shook a little holy water over the hob, and muttered to herself an Irish charm or prayer against the evils which crickets are often supposed by the peasantry to bring with them, and requested, still in the words of the charm, that their presence might, on that occasion, rather be a presage of good fortune to man and beast belonging to her.

"There now, ye *dhonans* ye, sure ye can't say that ye're ill-thrated here, anyhow, or ever was mocked or made game of in the same family. You have got your hansel, an' full an' plenty of it; hopin' at the same time that you'll have no rason in life to cut our best clothes from revinge. Sure an' I didn't desarve to have my brave stuff *long body* riddled the way it was the last time ye wor here, an' only bekase little Barny, that has but the sinse of a *gorsoon*, tould yez in a joke to pack off wid yourselves somewhere else. Musha, never heed what the likes of him says; sure he's but a *caudy*, that doesn't mane ill, only the bit o' divarsion wid yez."

She then resumed her knitting, occasionally stopping, as she changed her needles, to listen, with

her ear set, as if she wished to augur from the nature of their chirping, whether they came for good or evil. This, however, seemed to be beyond her faculty of translating their language; for after sagely shaking her head two or three times, she knit more busily than before.

At this moment, the shadow of a person passing the house darkened the window opposite which she sat, and immediately a tall female, of a wild dress and aspect, entered the kitchen.

"*Gho manhy dhea ghud, a ban chohr!* the blessin' o' goodness upon you, dacent woman," said Mrs. Sullivan, addressing her in those kindly phrases so peculiar to the Irish language.

Instead of making her any reply, however, the woman, whose eye glistened with a wild depth of meaning, exclaimed in low tones, apparently of much anguish, "*Husht, husht, dherum!* husht, husht, I say—let me alone—I will do it—will you husht? I will, I say—I will—there now—that's it—be quiet, an' I will do it—be quiet!" and as she thus spoke she turned her face back over her left shoulder, as if some invisible being dogged her steps, and stood bending over her.

"*Gho manhy dhea ghud, a ban chohr, dherhum areesht!* the blessin' o' God on you, honest woman, I say again," said Mrs. Sullivan, repeating that *sacred* form of salutation with which the peasantry address each other. "'Tis a fine evenin', honest woman, glory be to Him that sent the same, and amin! If it was cowld, I'd be axin' you to draw your chair in to the fire; but, any way, won't you sit down?"

As she ceased speaking the piercing eye of the strange woman became riveted on her with a glare, which, whilst it startled Mrs. Sullivan, seemed full of an agony that almost abstracted her from external life. It was not, however, so wholly absorbing as to prevent it from expressing a marked interest, whether for good or evil, in the woman who addressed her so hospitably.

"Husht, now—husht," she said, as if aside—"husht, won't you—sure I may speak *the thing* to her—you said it—there now, husht!" And then fastening her dark eyes on Mrs. Sullivan, she smiled bitterly and mysteriously.

"I know you well," she said, without, however, returning the *blessing* contained in the usual reply to Mrs. Sullivan's salutation—"I know you well, Mary Sullivan—husht, now, husht—yes, I know you well, and the power of all that you carry about you; but you'd be better than you are—and that's well enough *now*—if you had sense to know—ah, ah, ah!—what's this!" she exclaimed abruptly, with three distinct shrieks, that seemed to be produced by sensations of sharp and piercing agony.

"In the name of goodness, what's over you, honest woman?" inquired Mrs. Sullivan, as she started from her chair, and ran to her in a state of alarm, bordering on terror—"Is it sick you are?"

The woman's face had got haggard, and its features distorted; but in a few minutes they resumed their peculiar expression of settled wildness and mystery. "Sick!" she replied, licking her parched lips; "*awirck, awirck!* look! look!" and she pointed

with a shudder that almost convulsed her whole frame, to a lump that rose on her shoulders; this, be it what it might, was covered with a red cloak, closely pinned and tied with great caution about her body—"'tis here!—I have it!"

"Blessed mother!" exclaimed Mrs. Sullivan, tottering over to her chair, as finished a picture of horror as the eye could witness, "this day's Friday: the saints stand betwixt me an' all harm! Oh, holy Mary, protect me! *Nhanim an airh*," in the name of the Father, etc., and she forthwith proceeded to bless herself, which she did thirteen times in honour of the blessed virgin and the twelve apostles.

"Ay, it's as you see!" replied the stranger bitterly. "It is here—husht, now—husht, I say—I will say *the thing* to her, mayn't I? Ay, indeed, Mary Sullivan, 'tis with me always—always. Well, well, no, I won't, I won't—easy. Oh, blessed saints, easy, and I won't!"

In the meantime Mrs. Sullivan had uncorked her bottle of holy water, and plentifully bedewed herself with it, as a preservative against this mysterious woman and her dreadful secret.

"Blessed mother above!" she ejaculated, "the *Lianhan Shee!*" And as she spoke, with the holy water in the palm of her hand, she advanced cautiously, and with great terror, to throw it upon the stranger and the unearthly thing she bore.

"Don't attempt it!" shouted the other, in tones of mingled fierceness and terror; "do you want to give *me* pain without keeping *yourself* anything at all safer? Don't you know *it* doesn't care about your

holy water? But I'd suffer for it, an' perhaps so would you."

Mrs. Sullivan, terrified by the agitated looks of the woman, drew back with affright, and threw the holy water with which she intended to purify the other on her own person.

"Why thin, you lost crathur, who or what are you at all?—don't, don't—for the sake of all the saints and angels of heaven, don't come next or near me—keep your distance—but what are you, or how did you come to get that 'good thing' you carry about wid you?"

"Ay, indeed!" replied the woman bitterly, "as if I would or could tell you that! I say, you woman, you're doing what's not right in asking me a question you ought not let to cross your lips—look to yourself, and what's over you."

The simple woman, thinking her meaning literal, almost leaped off her seat with terror, and turned up her eyes to ascertain whether or not any dreadful appearance had approached her, or hung over her where she sat.

"Woman," said she, "I spoke you kind an' fair, an' I wish you well—but"—

"But what?" replied the other—and her eyes kindled into deep and profound excitement, apparently upon very slight grounds.

"Why—hem—nothin' at all sure, only"—

"Only what?" asked the stranger, with a face of anguish that seemed to torture every feature out of its proper lineaments.

"Dacent woman," said Mrs. Sullivan, whilst the

hair began to stand with terror upon her head, "sure it's no wondher in life that I'm in a perplexity, whin a *Lianhan Shee* is undher the one roof wid me. 'Tisn't that I want to know anything at all about it —the dear forbid I should; but I never hard of a person bein' tormented wid it as you are. I always used to hear the people say that it thrated its friends well."

"Husht!" said the woman, looking wildly over her shoulder, "I'll not tell: it's on myself I'll leave the blame! Why, will you never pity me? Am I to be night and day tormented? Oh, you're wicked and cruel for no reason!"

"Thry," said Mrs. Sullivan, "an' bless yourself; call on God."

"Ah!" shouted the other, "are you going to get me killed?" and as she uttered the words, a spasmodic working which must have occasioned great pain, even to torture, became audible in her throat; her bosom heaved up and down, and her head was bent repeatedly on her breast, as if by force.

"Don't mention that name, said she, "in my presence, except you mean to drive me to utter distraction. I mean," she continued, after considerable effort to recover her former tone and manner— "hear me with attention—I mean, woman—you, Mary Sullivan—that if you mention that holy name, you might as well keep plunging sharp knives into my heart! Husht! peace to me for one minute, tormentor! Spare me something, I'm in your power!"

"Will you ate anything?" said Mrs. Sullivan; "poor crathur, you look like hunger an' distress; there's enough in the house, blessed be them that sent it! an' you had betther thry an' take some nourishment, any way;" and she raised her eyes in a silent prayer of relief and ease for the unhappy woman, whose unhallowed association had, in her opinion, sealed her doom.

"Will I?—will I?—oh!" she replied, "may you never know misery for offering it! Oh, bring me something—some refreshment—some food—for I'm dying with hunger."

Mrs. Sullivan, who, with all her superstition, was remarkable for charity and benevolence, immediately placed food and drink before her, which the stranger absolutely devoured—taking care occasionally to secrete under the protuberance which appeared behind her neck, a portion of what she ate. This, however, she did, not by stealth, but openly; merely taking means to prevent the concealed thing from being, by any possible accident, discovered.

When the craving of hunger was satisfied, she appeared to suffer less from the persecution of her tormentor than before; whether it was, as Mrs. Sullivan thought, that the food with which she plied it, appeased in some degree its irritability, or lessened that of the stranger, it was difficult to say; at all events, she became more composed; her eyes resumed somewhat of a natural expression; each sharp ferocious glare, which shot from them with such intense and rapid flashes, partially disappeared; her

knit brows dilated, and part of a forehead, which had once been capacious and handsome, lost the contractions which deformed it by deep wrinkles. Altogether the change was evident, and very much relieved Mrs. Sullivan, who could not avoid observing it.

"It's not that I care much about it, if you'd think it not right o' me, but it's odd enough for you to keep the lower part of your face muffled up in that black cloth, an' then your forehead, too, is covered down on your face a bit. If they're part of the *bargain*," — and she shuddered at the thought,— "between you an' anything that's not good—hem !— I think you'd do well to throw thim off o' you, an' turn to thim that can protect you from everything that's bad. Now, a scapular would keep all the divils in hell from one ; an' if you'd "—

On looking at the stranger she hesitated, for the wild expression of her eyes began to return.

"Don't begin my punishment again," replied the woman ; "make no allus—don't make mention in my presence of anything that's good. Husht—husht—it's beginning—easy now—easy ! No," said she, " I came to tell you, that only for my breaking a vow I made to this thing upon me, I'd be happy instead of miserable with it. I say, it's a good thing to have, if the person will use this bottle," she added, producing one, "as I will direct them."

"I wouldn't wish, for my part," replied Mrs. Sullivan, "to have anything to do wid it—neither act nor part ;" and she crossed herself devoutly, on contemplating such an unholy alliance as that at which her companion hinted.

"Mary Sullivan," replied the other, "I can put good fortune and happiness in the way of you and yours. It is for you the good is intended; if *you* don't get both, *no other* can," and her eyes kindled as she spoke like those of the Pythoness in the moment of inspiration.

Mrs. Sullivan looked at her with awe, fear, and a strong mixture of curiosity; she had often heard that the *Lianhan Shee* had, through means of the person to whom it was bound, conferred wealth upon several, although it could never render this important service to those who exercised direct authority over it. She therefore experienced something like a conflict between her fears and a love of that wealth, the possession of which was so plainly intimated to her.

"The money," said she, "would be one thing, but to have the *Lianhan Shee* planted over a body's shouldher—och! the saints preserve us!—no, not for oceans of hard goold would I have it in my company one minnit. But in regard to the money—hem!—why, if it could be managed widout havin' act or part wid *that thing*, people would do anything in rason and fairity."

"You have this day been kind to me," replied the woman, "and that's what I can't say of many—dear help me!—husht! Every door is shut in my face! Does not every cheek get pale when I am seen? If I meet a fellow-creature on the road, they turn into the field to avoid me; if I ask for food, it's to a deaf ear I speak; if I am thirsty, they send me to the river. What house would shelter me? In cold, in hunger, in drought, in storm, and in tempest,

I am alone and unfriended, hated, feared, an' avoided; starving in the winter's cold, and burning in the summer's heat. All this is my fate here; and—oh! oh! oh!—have mercy, tormentor—have mercy! I will not lift my thoughts *there*—I'll keep the paction—but spare me *now!*"

She turned round as she spoke, seeming to follow an invisible object, or, perhaps, attempting to get a more complete view of the mysterious being which exercised such a terrible and painful influence over her. Mrs. Sullivan, also, kept her eye fixed upon the lump, and actually believed that she saw it move. Fear of incurring the displeasure of what it contained, and a superstitious reluctance harshly to thrust a person from her door who had eaten of her food, prevented her from desiring the woman to depart.

"In the name of Goodness," she replied, "I will have nothing to do wid your gift. Providence, blessed be His name, has done well for me an' mine; an' it mightn't be right to go beyant what it has pleased *Him* to give me."

"A rational sentiment!—I mean there's good sense in what you say," answered the stranger: "but you need not be afraid," and she accompanied the expression by holding up the bottle and kneeling. "Now," she added, "listen to me, and judge for yourself, if what I say, when I swear it, can be a lie." She then proceeded to utter oaths of the most solemn nature, the purport of which was to assure Mrs. Sullivan that drinking of the bottle would be attended with no danger.

"You see this little bottle? Drink it. Oh, for my

sake and your own, drink it; it will give wealth without end to you and to all belonging to you. Take one-half of it before sunrise, and the other half when he goes down. You must stand while drinking it, with your face to the east, in the morning; and at night, to the west. Will you promise to do thus?"

"How would drinkin' the bottle get me money?" inquired Mrs. Sullivan, who certainly felt a strong tendency of heart to the wealth.

"That I can't tell you now, nor would you understand it, even if I could; but you will know all when what I say is complied with."

"Keep your bottle, dacent woman. I wash my hands out of it: the saints above guard me from the timptation! I'm sure it's not right, for as I'm a sinner, 'tis gettin' stronger every minute widin me! Keep it! I'm loth to bid any one that *ett* o' my bread to go from my hearth, but if you go, I'll make it worth your while. Saints above! what's comin' over me? In my whole life I never had such a hankerin' afther money! Well, well, but it's quare entirely!"

"Will you drink it?" asked her companion. "If it does hurt or harm to you or yours, or anything but good, may what is hanging over me be fulfilled!" and she extended a thin, but, considering her years, not ungraceful arm, in the act of holding out the bottle to her kind entertainer.

"For the sake of all that's good and gracious, take it without scruple—it is not hurtful, a child might drink every drop that's in it. Oh, for the sake of all

you love, and of all that love you, take it!" and as she urged her the tears streamed down her cheeks.

"No, no," replied Mrs. Sullivan, "it'll never cross my lips; not if it made me as rich as ould Hendherson, that airs his guineas in the sun, for fraid they'd get light by lyin' past."

"I entreat you to take it," said the strange woman.

"Never, never!—once for all—I say, I won't; so spare your breath."

The firmness of the good housewife was not, in fact, to be shaken; so, after exhausting all the motives and arguments with which she could urge the accomplishment of her design, the strange woman, having again put the bottle into her bosom, prepared to depart.

She had now once more become calm, and resumed her seat with the languid air of one who has suffered much exhaustion and excitement. She put her hand upon her forehead for a few moments, as if collecting her faculties, or endeavouring to remember the purport of their previous conversation. A slight moisture had broken through her skin, and altogether, notwithstanding her avowed criminality in entering into an unholy bond, she appeared an object of deep compassion.

In a moment her manner changed again, and her eyes blazed out once more, as she asked her alarmed hostess,—

"Again, Mary Sullivan, will you take the gift that I have it in my power to give you? ay or no? speak,

poor mortal, if you know what is for your own good."

Mrs. Sullivan's fears, however, had overcome her love of money, particularly as she thought that wealth obtained in such a manner could not prosper; her only objection being to the means of acquiring it.

"Oh!" said the stranger, "am I doomed never to meet with any one who will take the promise off me by drinking of this bottle. Oh! but I am unhappy! What it is to fear—ah! ah!—and keep *His* commandments. Had *I* done so in my youthful time, I wouldn't now—ah—merciful mother, is there no relief? kill me, tormentor; kill me outright, for surely the pangs of eternity cannot be greater than those you now make me suffer. Woman," said she, and her muscles stood out in extraordinary energy—"woman, Mary Sullivan—ay, if you should kill me—blast me—where I stand, I will say the word—woman—you have daughters—teach them—to fear"— Having got so far, she stopped—her bosom heaved up and down—her frame shook dreadfully—her eyeballs became lurid and fiery—her hands were clenched, and the spasmodic throes of inward convulsion worked the white froth up to her mouth; at length she suddenly became like a statue, with this wild supernatural expression intense upon her, and with an awful calmness, by far more dreadful than excitement could be, concluded by pronouncing in deep husky tones the name of God.

Having accomplished this with such a powerful struggle, she turned round with pale despair in her countenance and manner, and with streaming eyes

slowly departed, leaving Mrs. Sullivan in a situation not at all to be envied.

In a short time the other members of the family, who had been out at their evening employments, returned. Bartley, her husband, having entered somewhat sooner than his three daughters from milking, was the first to come in; presently the girls followed, and in a few minutes they sat down to supper, together with the servants, who dropped in one by one, after the toil of the day. On placing themselves about the table, Bartley as usual took his seat at the head; but Mrs. Sullivan, instead of occupying hers, sat at the fire in a state of uncommon agitation. Every two or three minutes she would cross herself devoutly, and mutter such prayers against spiritual influences of an evil nature as she could compose herself to remember.

"Thin, why don't you come to your supper, Mary," said the husband, "while the sowans are warm? Brave and thick they are this night, any way."

His wife was silent, for so strong a hold had the strange woman and her appalling secret upon her mind, that it was not till he repeated his question three or four times—raising his head with surprise, and asking, "Eh, thin, Mary, what's come over you—is it unwell you are?"—that she noticed what he said.

"Supper!" she exclaimed; "unwell! 'tis a good right I have to be unwell,—I hope nothing bad will happen, any way. Feel my face, Nannie," she added, addressing one of her daughters; "it's as cowld an'

wet as a limestone—ay, an' if you found me a corpse before you, it wouldn't be at all strange."

There was a general pause at the seriousness of this intimation. The husband rose from his supper, and went up to the hearth where she sat.

"Turn round to the light," said he; "why, Mary dear, in the name of wondher, what ails you? for you're like a corpse sure enough. Can't you tell us what has happened, or what put you in such a state? Why, childhre, the cowld sweat's teemin' off her!"

The poor woman, unable to sustain the shock produced by her interview with the stranger, found herself getting more weak, and requested a drink of water; but before it could be put to her lips, she laid her head upon the back of the chair and fainted. Grief, and uproar, and confusion followed this alarming incident. The presence of mind, so necessary on such occasions, was wholly lost; one ran here, and another there, all jostling against each other, without being cool enough to render her proper assistance. The daughters were in tears, and Bartley himself was dreadfully shocked by seeing his wife apparently lifeless before him.

She soon recovered, however, and relieved them from the apprehension of her death, which they thought had actually taken place. "Mary," said the husband, "something quare entirely has happened, or you wouldn't be in this state!"

"Did any of you see a strange woman lavin' the house a minute or two before ye came in?" she inquired.

"No," they replied, "not a stim of any one did we see."

"Wurrah dheelish! No?—now is it possible ye didn't?" She then described her, but all declared they had seen no such person.

"Bartley, whisper," said she, and beckoning him over to her, in few words she revealed the secret. The husband grew pale and crossed himself. "Mother of Saints! childhre," said he, "a *Lianhan Shee!*" The words were no sooner uttered than every countenance assumed the pallidness of death; and every right hand was raised in the act of blessing the person, and crossing the forehead. "*The Lianhan Shee!!*" all exclaimed in fear and horror—"This day's Friday; God betwixt us an' harm!"

It was now after dusk, and the hour had already deepened into the darkness of a calm, moonless, summer night; the hearth, therefore, in a short time, became surrounded by a circle, consisting of every person in the house; the door was closed and securely bolted;—a struggle for the safest seat took place; and to Bartley's shame be it spoken, he lodged himself on the hob within the jamb, as the most distant situation from the fearful being known as the *Lianhan Shee.* The recent terror, however, brooded over them all; their topic of conversation was the mysterious visit, of which Mrs. Sullivan gave a painfully accurate detail; whilst every ear of those who composed her audience was set, and every single hair of their heads bristled up, as if awakened into distinct life by the story. Bartley looked into the fire soberly, except when the cat, in prowling about the dresser,

electrified him into a start of fear, which sensation went round every link of the living chain about the hearth.

The next day the story spread through the whole neighbourhood, accumulating in interest and incident as it went. Where it received the touches, embellishments, and emendations, with which it was amplified, it would be difficult to say; every one told it, forsooth, *exactly* as he heard it from another, but indeed it is not improbable that those through whom it passed were unconscious of the additions it had received at their hands. It is not unreasonable to suppose that imagination in such cases often colours highly without a premeditated design of falsehood. Fear and dread, however, accompanied its progress; such families as had neglected to keep holy water in their houses borrowed some from their neighbours; every old prayer which had become rusty from disuse was brightened up—charms were hung about the necks of cattle, and gospels about those of children—crosses were placed over the doors and windows;—no unclean water was thrown out before sunrise or after dusk—

> "E'en those prayed now who never prayed before,
> And those who always prayed, still prayed the more."

The inscrutable woman who caused such general dismay in the parish was an object of much pity. Avoided, feared, and detested, she could find no rest for her weary feet, nor any shelter for her unprotected head. If she was seen approaching a house, the door and windows were immediately closed

against her; if met on the way she was avoided as a pestilence. How she lived no one could tell, for none would permit themselves to know. It was asserted that she existed without meat or drink, and that she was doomed to remain possessed of life, the prey of hunger and thirst, until she could get some one weak enough to break the spell by drinking her hellish draught, to taste which, they said, would be to change places with herself, and assume her despair and misery.

There had lived in the country about six months before her appearance in it, a man named Stephenson. He was unmarried, and the last of his family. This person led a solitary and secluded life, and exhibited during the last years of his existence strong symptoms of eccentricity, which for some months before his death assumed a character of unquestionable derangement. He was found one morning hanging by a halter in his own stable, where he had, under the influence of his malady, committed suicide. At this time the public press had not, as now, familiarized the minds of the people to that dreadful crime, and it was consequently looked upon *then* with an intensity of horror, of which we can scarcely entertain any adequate notion. His farm remained unoccupied, for while an acre of land could be obtained in any other quarter, no man would enter upon such unhallowed premises. The house was locked up, and it was currently reported that Stephenson and the devil each night repeated the hanging scene in the stable; and that when the former was committing the "hopeless sin," the halter slipped several times

from the beam of the stable-loft, when Satan came, in the shape of a dark-complexioned man with a hollow voice, and secured the rope until Stephenson's end was accomplished.

In this stable did the wanderer take up her residence at night; and when we consider the belief of the people in the night-scenes which were supposed to occur in it, we need not be surprised at the new feature of horror which this circumstance superadded to her character. Her presence and appearance in the parish were dreadful; a public outcry was soon raised against her, which, were it not from fear of her power over their lives and cattle, might have ended in her death. None, however, had courage to grapple with her, or to attempt expelling her by violence, lest a signal vengeance might be taken on any who dared to injure a woman that could call in the terrible aid of the *Lianhan Shee.*

In this state of feeling they applied to the parish priest, who, on hearing the marvellous stories related concerning her, and on questioning each man closely upon his authority, could perceive that, like most other reports, they were to be traced principally to the imagination and fears of the people. He ascertained, however, enough from Bartley Sullivan to justify a belief that there was something certainly uncommon about the woman; and being of a cold, phlegmatic disposition, with some humour, he desired them to go home, if they were wise—he shook his head mysteriously as he spoke—"and do the woman no injury, if they didn't wish"—and with this abrupt hint he sent them about their business.

This, however, did not satisfy them. In the same parish lived a suspended priest, called Father Philip O'Dallaghy, who supported himself, as most of them do, by curing certain diseases of the people—miraculously! He had no other means of subsistence, nor, indeed, did he seem strongly devoted to life, or to the pleasures it afforded. He was not addicted to those intemperate habits which characterize "Blessed Priests" in general; spirits he never tasted, nor any food that could be termed a luxury, or even a comfort. His communion with the people was brief, and marked by a tone of severe contemptuous misanthropy. He seldom stirred abroad except during morning, or in the evening twilight, when he might be seen gliding amidst the coming darkness, life a dissatisfied spirit. His life was an austere one, and his devotional practices were said to be of the most remorseful character. Such a man, in fact, was calculated to hold a powerful sway over the prejudices and superstitions of the people. This was true. His power was considered almost unlimited, and his life one that would not disgrace the highest saint in the calendar. There were not wanting some persons in the parish who hinted that Father Felix O'Rourke, the parish priest, was himself rather reluctant to incur the displeasure, or challenge the power of the *Lianhan Shee*, by driving its victim out of the parish. The opinion of these persons was, in its distinct unvarnished reality, that Father Felix absolutely showed the white feather on this critical occasion—that he became shy, and begged leave to decline being introduced to this intractable pair—seeming to

intimate that he did not at all relish adding them to the stock of his acquaintances.

Father Philip they considered as a decided contrast to him on this point. His stern and severe manner, rugged, and, when occasion demanded, daring, they believed suitable to the qualities requisite for sustaining such an interview. They accordingly waited on him; and after Bartley and his friends had given as faithful a report of the circumstances as, considering all things, could be expected, he told Bartley he would hear from Mrs. Sullivan's own lips the authentic narrative. This was quite satisfactory, and what was expected from him. As for himself, he appeared to take no particular interest in the matter, further than that of allaying the ferment and alarm which had spread through the parish.

"Plase your Reverence," said Bartley, "she came in to Mary, and she alone in the house, and for the matther o' that, I believe she laid hands upon her, and tossed and tumbled the crathur, and she but a sickly woman, through the four corners of the house. Not that Mary lets an so much, for she's afeard; but I know from her way, when she spakes about her, that it's thruth, your Reverence."

"But didn't the *Lianhan Shee*," said one of them, "put a sharp-pointed knife to her breast, wid a divilish intintion of makin' her give the best of atin' an' dhrinkin' the house afforded?"

"She got the victuals, to a sartinty," replied Bartley, "and 'overlooked' my woman for her pains; for she's not the picture of herself since."

Every one now told some magnified and terrible

circumstance, illustrating the formidable power of the *Lianhan Shee.*

When they had finished, the sarcastic lip of the priest curled into an expression of irony and contempt; his brow, which was naturally black and heavy, darkened; and a keen, but rather a ferocious-looking eye, shot forth a glance, which, while it intimated disdain for those to whom it was directed, spoke also of a dark and troubled spirit in himself. The man seemed to brook with scorn the degrading situation of a religious quack, to which some uncontrollable destiny had doomed him.

"I shall see your wife to-morrow," said he to Bartley; "and after hearing the plain account of what happened, I will consider what is best to be done with this dark, perhaps unhappy, perhaps guilty character; but whether dark, or unhappy, or guilty, I, for one, should not, and will not, avoid her. Go, and bring me word to-morrow evening when I can see her on the following day. Begone!"

When they withdrew, Father Philip paced his room for some time in silence and anxiety.

"Ay," said he, "infatuated people! sunk in superstition and ignorance, yet, perhaps, happier in your degradation than those who, in the pride of knowledge, can only look back upon a life of crime and misery. What is a sceptic? What is an infidel? Men who, when they will not submit to moral restraint, harden themselves into scepticism and infidelity, until, in the headlong career of guilt, that which was first adopted to lull the outcry of conscience, is supported by the pretended pride of

principle. Principle in a sceptic! Hollow and devilish lie! Would *I* have plunged into scepticism, had I not first violated the moral sanctions of religion? Never. I became an infidel, because I first became a villain! Writhing under a load of guilt, that which I wished might be true, I soon forced myself to think true: and now"—he here clenched his hands and groaned—"now—ay, now—and hereafter—oh, *that* hereafter! Why can I not shake the thoughts of it from my conscience? Religion! Christianity! With all the hardness of an infidel's heart, I feel your truth; because, if every man were the villain that infidelity would make him, then indeed might every man curse God for the existence bestowed upon him—as I would, but dare not do. Yet why can I not believe? Alas! why should God accept an unrepentant heart? Am I not a hypocrite, mocking Him by a guilty pretension to His power, and leading the dark into thicker darkness? Then these hands—blood!—broken vows!—ha! ha! ha! Well, go—let misery have its laugh, like the light that breaks from the thunder-cloud. Prefer Voltaire to Christ; sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind, as I have done—ha, ha, ha! Swim, world—swim about me! I have lost the ways of Providence, and am dark! *She* awaits me; but I broke the chain that galled us: yet it still rankles—still rankles!"

The unhappy man threw himself into a chair in a paroxysm of frenzied agony. For more than an hour he sat in the same posture, until he became gradually hardened into a stiff, lethargic insensibility, callous and impervious to feeling, reason, or religion—an

awful transition from a visitation of conscience so terrible as that which he had just suffered. At length he arose, and by walking moodily about, relapsed into his usual gloomy and restless character.

When Bartley went home, he communicated to his wife Father Philip's intention of calling on the following day, to hear a correct account of the *Lianhan Shee.*

"Why, thin," said she, "I'm glad of it, for I intinded myself to go to him, any way, to get my new scapular consecrated. How-an'-ever, as he's to come, I'll get a set of gospels for the boys an' girls, an' he can consecrate all when his hand's in. Aroon, Bartley, they say that man's so holy that he can do anything—ay, melt a body off the face o' the earth, like snow off a ditch. Dear me, but the power they have is strange all out!"

"There's no use in gettin' him anything to ate or dhrink," replied Bartley; "he wouldn't take a glass o' whisky once in seven years. Throth, myself thinks he's a little too dhry; sure he might be holy enough, an' yet take a sup of an odd time. There's Father Felix, an' though we all know he's far from bein' so blessed a man as him, yet he has friendship an' neighbourliness in him, an' never refuses a glass in rason."

"But do you know what I was tould about Father Philip, Bartley?"

"I'll tell you that afther I hear it, Mary, my woman; you won't expect me to tell what I don't know?—ha, ha, ha!"

"Behave, Bartley, an' quit your jokin' now, at

all evints; keep it till we're talkin' of somethin' else, an' don't let us be committin' sin, maybe, while we're spakin' of what we're spakin' about; but they say it's as thrue as the sun to the dial:—the Lent afore last itself it was,—he never tasted mate or dhrink durin' the whole seven weeks! Oh, you needn't stare! it's well known by thim that has as much sinse as you—no, not so much as you'd carry on the point o' this knittin'-needle. Well, sure the housekeeper an' the two sarvants wondhered—faix, they couldn't do less—an' took it into their heads to watch him closely; an' what do you think—blessed be all the saints above!—what do you think they *seen?*"

"The Goodness above knows; for me—I don't."

"Why, thin, whin he was asleep they seen a small silk thread in his mouth, that came down through the ceilin' from heaven, an' he suckin' it, just as a child would his mother's breast whin the crathur 'ud be asleep: so that was the way he was supported by the angels! An' I remimber myself, though he's a dark, spare, yallow man at all times, yet he never looked half so fat an' rosy as he did the same Lent!"

"Glory be to Heaven! Well, well—*it is* sthrange the power they have! As for him, I'd as *lee* meet St. Pether, or St. Pathrick himself, as him; for one can't but fear him, somehow."

"Fear him! Och, it 'ud be the pity o' thim that 'ud do anything to vex or anger that man. Why, his very look 'ud wither thim, till there wouldn't be the thrack o' thim on the earth; an' as for his curse, why it 'ud scorch thim to ashes!"

As it was generally known that Father Philip was to visit Mrs. Sullivan the next day, in order to hear an account of the mystery which filled the parish with such fear, a very great number of the parishioners were assembled in and about Bartley's long before he made his appearance. At length he was seen walking slowly down the road, with an open book in his hand, on the pages of which he looked from time to time. When he approached the house, those who were standing about it assembled in a body, and, with one consent, uncovered their heads, and asked his blessing. His appearance bespoke a mind ill at ease; his face was haggard, and his eyes bloodshot. On seeing the people kneel, he smiled with his usual bitterness, and, shaking his hand with an air of impatience over them, muttered some words, rather in mockery of the ceremony than otherwise. They then rose, and, blessing themselves, put on their hats, rubbed the dust off their knees, and appeared to think themselves recruited by a peculiar accession of grace.

On entering the house the same form was repeated; and when it was over, the best chair was placed for him by Mary's own hands, and the fire stirred up, and a line of respect drawn, within which none was to intrude, lest he might feel in any degree incommoded.

"My good neighbour," said he to Mrs. Sullivan, "what strange woman is this, who has thrown the parish into such a ferment? I'm told she paid you a visit? Pray sit down."

"I humbly thank your Reverence," said Mary, curtseying lowly, "but I'd rather not sit, Sir, if you

plase. I hope I know what respect manes, your Reverence. Barny Bradagh, I'll thank you to stand up, if you plase, an' his Reverence to the fore, Barny."

"I ax your Reverence's pardon, an' yours, too, Mrs. Sullivan; sure we didn't mane the disrespect, anyhow, Sir, plase your Reverence."

"About this woman, and the *Lianhan Shee*," said the priest, without noticing Barny's apology. "Pray what do you precisely understand by a *Lianhan Shee?*"

"Why, Sir," replied Mary, "some sthrange bein' from the good people, or fairies, that sticks to some persons. There's a bargain, Sir, your Reverence, made atween thim; an' the divil, Sir, that is, the ould boy—the saints about us!—has a hand in it. The *Lianhan Shee*, your Reverence, is never seen only by thim it keeps wid; but—hem!—it always, wid the help of the ould boy, conthrives, Sir, to make the person brake the agreement, an' thin it has *thim* in *its* power; but if they *don't* brake the agreement, thin *it's* in *their* power. If they can get anybody to put in their place, they may get out o' the bargain; for they can, of a sartainty, give oceans o' money to people, but can't take any themselves, plase your Reverence. But sure, where's the use o' me to be tellin' your Reverence what you know betther nor myself?—an' why shouldn't you, or any one that has the power you have?"

He smiled again at this in his own peculiar manner, and was proceeding to inquire more particularly into the nature of the interview between them, when the

noise of feet, and sounds of general alarm, accompanied by a rush of people into the house, arrested his attention, and he hastily inquired into the cause of the commotion. Before he could receive a reply, however, the house was almost crowded; and it was not without considerable difficulty that, by the exertions of Mrs. Sullivan and Bartley, sufficient order and quiet were obtained to hear distinctly what was said.

"Plase your Reverence," said several voices at once, "they're comin', hot-foot, into the very house to us! Was ever the likes seen! an' they must know right well, Sir, that you're widin it."

"Who are coming?" he inquired.

"Why, the woman, Sir, an' her *good pet*, the *Lianhan Shee*, your Reverence."

"Well," said he, "but why should you all appear so blanched with terror? Let her come in, and we shall see how far she is capable of injuring her fellow-creatures: some maniac," he muttered, in a low soliloquy, "whom the villany of the world has driven into derangement—some victim to a hand like m—. Well, they say there *is* a Providence, yet such things are permitted!"

"He's sayin' a prayer now," observed one of them; "haven't we a good right to be thankful that he's in the place wid us while she's in it, or dear knows what harm she might do us—maybe *rise* the wind!"

As the latter speaker concluded, there was a dead silence. The persons about the door crushed each other backwards, their feet set out before them, and their shoulders laid with violent pressure against those who stood behind, for each felt anxious to avoid

all danger of contact with a being against whose power even a blessed priest found it necessary to guard himself by a prayer.

At length a low murmur ran among the people—"Father O'Rourke!—here's Father O'Rourke!—he has turned the corner after her, an' they're both comin' in." Immediately they entered, but it was quite evident from the manner of the worthy priest, that he was unacquainted with the person of this singular being. When they crossed the threshold, the priest advanced, and expressed his surprise at the throng of people assembled.

"Plase your Reverence," said Bartley, "*that's* the woman," nodding significantly towards her as he spoke, but without looking at her person, lest the evil eye he dreaded so much might meet his, and give him "the blast."

The dreaded female, on seeing the house in such a crowded state, started, paused, and glanced with some terror at the persons assembled. Her dress was not altered since her last visit; but her countenance, though more meagre and emaciated, expressed but little of the unsettled energy which then flashed from her eyes, and distorted her features by the depth of that mysterious excitement by which she had been agitated. Her countenance was still muffled as before, the awful protuberance rose from her shoulders, and the same band which Mrs. Sullivan had alluded to during their interview, was bound about the upper part of her forehead.

She had already stood upwards of two minutes, during which the fall of a feather might be heard,

yet none bade God bless her—no kind hand was extended to greet her—no heart warmed in affection towards her; on the contrary, every eye glanced at her, as a being marked with enmity towards God. Blanched faces and knit brows, the signs of fear and hatred, were turned upon her; her breath was considered pestilential, and her touch paralysis. There she stood, proscribed, avoided, and hunted like a tigress, all fearing to encounter, yet wishing to exterminate her! Who could she be?—or what had she done, that the finger of the Almighty marked her out for such a fearful weight of vengeance?

Father Philip rose and advanced a few steps, until he stood confronting her. His person was tall, his features dark, severe, and solemn: and when the nature of the investigation about to take place is considered, it need not be wondered at, that the moment was, to those present, one of deep and impressive interest—such as a visible conflict between a supposed champion of God and a supernatural being was calculated to excite.

"Woman," said he, in his deep stern voice, "tell me who and what you are, and why you assume a character of such a repulsive and mysterious nature, when it can entail only misery, shame, and persecution on yourself? I conjure you, in the name of Him after whose image you are created, to speak truly!"

He paused, and the tall figure stood mute before him. The silence was dead as death—every breath was hushed—and the persons assembled stood immovable as statues! Still she spoke not; but the

violent heaving of her breast evinced the internal working of some dreadful struggle. Her face before was pale—it was now ghastly; her lips became blue, and her eyes vacant.

"Speak!" said he, "I conjure you in the name of the power by whom you live!"

It is probable that the agitation under which she laboured was produced by the severe effort made to sustain the unexpected trial she had to undergo.

For some minutes her struggle continued; but having begun at its hightest pitch, it gradually subsided until it settled in a calmness which appeared fixed and awful as the resolution of despair. With breathless composure she turned round, and put back that part of her dress which concealed her face, except the band on her forehead, which she did not remove; having done this, she turned again, and walked calmly towards Father Philip, with a deadly smile upon her thin lips. When within a step of where he stood, she paused, and riveting her eyes upon him, exclaimed,—

"Who and what am I? The victim of infidelity and you, the bearer of a cursed existence, the scoff and scorn of the world, the monument of a broken vow and a guilty life, a being scourged by the scorpion lash of conscience, blasted by periodical insanity, pelted by the winter's storm, scorched by the summer's heat, withered by starvation, hated by man, and touched into my inmost spirit by the anticipated tortures of future misery. I have no rest for the sole of my foot, no repose for a head distracted by the contemplation of a guilty life; I am the unclean spirit which walketh to seek rest and findeth

none; I am—*what you have made me!* Behold," she added, holding up the bottle, "this failed, and I live to accuse you. But no, you are my husband —though our union was but a guilty form, and I will bury that in silence. You thought me dead, and you flew to avoid punishment; did you avoid it? No; the finger of God has written pain and punishment upon your brow. I have been in all characters, in all shapes, have spoken with the tongue of a peasant, moved in my natural sphere; but my knees were smitten, my brain stricken, and the wild malady which banishes me from society has been upon me for years. Such I am, and such, I say, have you made me. As for you, kind-hearted woman, there was nothing in this bottle but pure water. The interval of reason returned this day, and having remembered glimpses of our conversation, I came to apologise to you, and to explain the nature of my unhappy distemper, and to beg a little bread, which I have not tasted for two days. I at times conceive myself attended by an evil spirit, shaped out by a guilty conscience, and this is the only familiar which attends me, and by it I have been dogged into madness through every turning of life. Whilst it lasts I am subject to spasms and convulsive starts which are exceedingly painful. The lump on my back is the robe I wore when innocent in my peaceful convent."

The intensity of general interest was now transferred to Father Philip; every face was turned towards him, but he cared not. A solemn stillness yet prevailed among all present. From the moment she

spoke, her eye drew his with the power of a basilisk. His pale face became like marble, not a muscle moved; and when she ceased speaking, his blood-shot eyes were still fixed upon her countenance with a gloomy calmness like that which precedes a tempest. They stood before each other, dreadful counterparts in guilt, for truly his spirit was as dark as hers.

At length he glanced angrily around him:—"Well," said he, "what is it now, ye poor infatuated wretches, to trust in the sanctity *of man?* Learn from me to place the same confidence *in God* which you place in His *guilty creatures*, and you will not lean on a broken reed. Father O'Rourke, you, too, witness my disgrace, but not my punishment. It is pleasant, no doubt, to have a topic for conversation at your Conferences; enjoy it. As for you, Margaret, if society lessen misery, we may be less miserable. But the band of your order, and the remembrance of your vow is on your forehead, like the mark of Cain—tear it off, and let it not blast a man who is the victim of prejudice still, nay, of superstition, as well as of guilt; tear it from my sight." His eyes kindled fearfully as he attempted to pull it away by force.

She calmly took it off, and he immediately tore it into pieces, and stamped upon the fragments as he flung them on the ground.

"Come," said the despairing man—"come—there is a shelter for you, *but no peace!*—food, and drink, and raiment, but *no peace!*—NO PEACE!" As he uttered these words, in a voice that sank to its deepest

pitch, he took her hand, and they both departed to his own residence.

The amazement and horror of those who were assembled in Bartley's house cannot be described. Our readers may be assured that they deepened in character as they spread through the parish. An undefined fear of this mysterious pair seized upon the people, for their images were associated in their minds with darkness and crime, and supernatural communion. The departing words of Father Philip rang in their ears: they trembled, and devoutly crossed themselves, as fancy again repeated the awful exclamation of the priest—"No peace! no peace!"

When Father Philip and his unhappy associate went home, he instantly made her a surrender of his small property; but with difficulty did he command sufficient calmness to accomplish even this. He was distracted—his blood seemed to have been turned to fire—he clenched his hands, and he gnashed his teeth, and exhibited the wildest symptoms of madness. About ten o'clock he desired fuel for a large fire to be brought into the kitchen, and got a strong cord, which he coiled, and threw carelessly on the table. The family were then ordered to bed. About eleven they were all asleep; and at the solemn hour of twelve he heaped additional fuel upon the living turf, until the blaze shone with scorching light upon everything around. Dark and desolating was the tempest within him, as he paced, with agitated steps, before the crackling fire.

"She is risen!" he exclaimed—"the spectre of all

my crimes is risen to haunt me through life! I *am* a murderer—yet she lives, and my guilt is not the less! The stamp of eternal infamy is upon me—the finger of scorn will mark me out—the tongue of reproach will sting me like that of the serpent—the deadly touch of shame will cover me like a leper—the laws of society will crush the murderer, not the less that his wickedness in blood has miscarried: after that comes the black and terrible tribunal of the Almighty's vengeance—of His fiery indignation! Hush!—What sounds are those? They deepen—they deepen! Is it thunder? It cannot be the crackling of the blaze! It *is* thunder!—but it speaks only to *my* ear! Hush! —Great God, there is a change in my voice! It is hollow and supernatural! Could a change have come over me? Am I living? Could I have— Hah!—Could I have departed? and am I now at length given over to the worm that never dies? If it be at my heart, I may feel it. God!—I am damned! Here is a viper twined about my limbs, trying to dart its fangs into my heart! Hah!—there are feet pacing in the room, too, and I hear voices! I am surrounded by evil spirits! Who's there?—What are you?—Speak!—They are silent!—There is no answer! Again comes the thunder! But perchance this is not my place of punishment, and I will try to leave these horrible spirits!"

He opened the door, and passed out into a small green field that lay behind the house. The night was calm, and the silence profound as death. Not a cloud obscured the heavens;—the light of the moon fell upon the stillness of the scene around him, with

all the touching beauty of a moonlit midnight in summer. Here he paused a moment, felt his brow, then his heart, the palpitations of which fell audibly upon his ear. He became somewhat cooler; the images of madness which had swept through his stormy brain disappeared, and were succeeded by a lethargic vacancy of thought, which almost deprived him of the consciousness of his own identity. From the green field he descended mechanically to a little glen which opened beside it. It was one of those delightful spots to which the heart clingeth. Its sloping sides were clothed with patches of wood, on the leaves of which the moonlight glanced with a soft lustre, rendered more beautiful by their stillness. That side on which the light could not fall, lay in deep shadow, which occasionally gave to the rocks and small projecting precipices an appearance of monstrous and unnatural life. Having passed through the tangled mazes of the glen, he at length reached its bottom, along which ran a brook, such as, in the description of the poet,—

> ——— "In the leafy month of June,
> Unto the sleeping woods all night,
> Singeth a quiet tune."

Here he stood, and looked upon the green winding margin of the streamlet—but its song he heard not. With the workings of a guilty conscience, the beautiful in nature can have no association. He looked up the glen, but its picturesque windings, soft vistas, and wild underwood mingling with grey rocks and taller trees, all mellowed by the moon-beams, had no

charms for him. He maintained a profound silence —but it was not the silence of peace or reflection. He endeavoured to recall the scenes of the past day, but could not bring them back to his memory. Even the fiery tide of thought, which, like burning lava, seared his brain a few moments before, was now cold and hardened. He could remember nothing. The convulsion of his mind was over, and his faculties were impotent and collapsed.

In this state he unconsciously retraced his steps, and had again reached the paddock adjoining his house, when, as he thought, the figure of his paramour stood before him. In a moment his former paroxysm returned, and with it the gloomy images of a guilty mind, charged with the extravagant horrors of brain-struck madness.

"What!" he exclaimed, "the band still on your forehead! Tear it off!"

He caught at the form as he spoke, but there was no resistance to his grasp. On looking again towards the spot, it had ceased to be visible. The storm within him arose once more; he rushed into the kitchen, where the fire blazed out with fiercer heat; again he imagined that the thunder came to his ears, but the thunderings which he heard were only the voice of conscience. Again his own footsteps and his voice sounded in his fancy as the footsteps and voices of fiends, with which his imagination peopled the room. His state and his existence seemed to him a confused and troubled dream; he tore his hair—threw it on the table—and immediately started back with a hollow groan; for his locks, which but a few

hours before had been as black as the raven's wing, were now white as snow!

On discovering this, he gave a low but frantic laugh. "Ha, ha, ha!" he exclaimed; "here is another mark—here is food for despair. Silently, but surely, did the hand of God work this, as a proof that I am hopeless! But I will bear it; I will bear the sight! I now feel myself a man blasted by the eye of God Himself! Ha, ha, ha! Food for despair! Food for despair!"

Immediately he passed into his own room, and approaching the looking-glass beheld a sight calculated to move a statue. His hair had become literally white, but the shades of his dark complexion, now distorted by terror and madness, flitted, as his features worked under the influence of his tremendous passions, into an expression so frightful, that deep fear came over himself. He snatched one of his razors, and fled from the glass to the kitchen. He looked upon the fire, and saw the white ashes lying around its edge.

"Ha!" said he, "the light is come! I see the sign. I am directed, and I will follow it. There is yet ONE hope. The immolation! I shall be saved, yet so as by fire. It is for this my hair has become white;—the sublime warning for my self-sacrifice! The colour of ashes!—white—white! It is so!—I will sacrifice my body in material fire, to save my soul from that which is eternal! But I had anticipated the SIGN! The self-sacrifice is accepted!"

We must here draw a veil over that which ensued, as the description of it would be both unnatural and

revolting. Let it be sufficient to say, that the next morning he was found burnt to a cinder, with the exception of his feet and legs, which remained as monuments of, perhaps, the most dreadful suicide that ever was committed by man. His razor, too, was found bloody, and several clots of gore were discovered about the hearth; from which circumstances it was plain that he had reduced his strength so much by loss of blood, that when he committed himself to the flames, he was unable, even had he been willing, to avoid the fiery and awful sacrifice of which he made himself the victim. If anything could deepen the impression of fear and awe, already so general among the people, it was the unparalleled nature of his death. Its circumstances are yet remembered in the parish and county wherein it occurred—*for it is no fiction*, gentle reader! and the titular bishop who then presided over the diocese declared, that while he lived no person bearing the unhappy man's name should ever be admitted to the clerical order.

The shock produced by his death struck the miserable woman into the utter darkness of settled derangement. She survived him some years, but wandered about through the province, still, according to the superstitious belief of the people, tormented by the terrible enmity of the *Lianhan Shee*.

THE MOUNTAIN PASS.

By Charles Lever.

On the whole, the journey, to me, was a delightful one, and certainly not the least pleasant portion of my life in Ireland. Endowed — partly from his individual gifts, partly from the nature of his sacred functions—with influence over all the humble ranks in life, the good priest jogged along with the assurance of a hearty welcome wherever he pleased to halt; the only look of disappointment being when he declined some proffered civility, or refused an invitation to delay his journey. The chariot was well known in every town and village, and scarcely was the rumble of its wheels heard coming up the "street," when the population might be seen assembling in little groups and knots, to have a word with "the Father"—to get his blessing, to catch his eye, or even obtain a nod from him. He knew every one and everything; and, with a tact which is believed to be the prerogative of royalty, he never miscalled a name, nor mistook an event. Inquiring after them for soul and body, he entered with real interest into all their hopes and plans, their fears and anticipations, and talked away about pigs, penances, purgatory, and potatoes, in a way that showed his information, on any of these matters, to be of no mean or common order.

By degrees our way left the more travelled high-road, and took by a mountain track, through a wild,

romantic line of country, beside the Shannon. No villages now presented themselves, and, indeed, but little trace of any habitation whatever: large, misshapen mountains, whose granite sides were scarce concealed by the dark fern, the only vegetation that clothed them, rose around and about us. In the valleys some strips of bog might be seen, with little hillocks of newly cut turf, the only semblance of man's work the eye could rest on. Tillage there was none. A dreary silence, too, reigned throughout. I listened in vain for the bleating of a lamb, or the solitary tinkle of a sheep-bell; but no — save the cawing of the rooks, or the mournful cry of the plover, I could hear nothing. Now and then, it is true, the heavy flapping of a strong wing would point the course of a heron soaring toward the river; but his low flight even spoke of solitude, and showed he feared not man in his wild and dreary mountains. At intervals we would see the Shannon winding along, far, far down below us; and I could mark the islands in the bay of Scariff, with their ruined churches and one solitary tower; but no sail floated on the surface, nor did an oar break the sluggish current of the stream. It was, indeed, a dreary scene, and, somehow, my companion's manner seemed coloured by its influence; for scarcely had we entered the little valley that led to this mountain track, than he became silent and thoughtful, absorbed in reflection, and when he spoke, either doing so at random, or in a vague and almost incoherent way, that showed his ideas were wandering.

I remarked that, as we stopped at a little forge

shortly after daybreak, the smith had taken the priest aside and whispered to him a few words, at which he seemed strangely moved ; and as they spoke together for some moments in an undertone, I perceived by the man's manner and gesture, as well as by the agitation of the good Father himself, that something of importance was being told. Without waiting to finish the little repair to the carriage which had caused our halt, he remounted hastily, and, beckoning me to take my place, drove on at a pace that spoke of haste and eagerness. I confess that my curiosity to know the reason was great, but as I could not with propriety ask, nor did my companion seem disposed to give the information, I soon relapsed into a silence unbroken as his own, and we travelled along for some miles without speaking. Now and then the priest would make an effort to relieve the weariness of the way by some remark upon the scenery, or some allusion to the wild grandeur of the pass ; but it was plain he spoke only from constraint, and that his mind was occupied on other and very different thoughts. It was now wearing late, and yet no trace of any house or habitation could I see where to rest for the night. Not wishing, however, to interrupt the current of my friend's thoughts, I maintained my silence, straining my eyes on every side, from the dark mountains that towered above me, to the narrow gloomy valley that lay several hundred feet beneath our track—but all in vain. The stillness was unbroken, and not a roof, not even a smoke-wreath, could be seen, far as the view extended.

The road by which we travelled was scarped from

the side of a mountain, and for some miles pursued a gradually descending course. On suddenly turning the angle of rocky wall that skirted us for above a mile, we came in sight of a long reach of the Shannon, upon which the sun was now setting in all its golden lustre. The distant shore of Munster, rich in tillage and pasture-land, was lit up, too, with corn-field and green meadow, leafy wood and blue mountain, all glowing in their brightest hue. It was a vivid and a gorgeous picture, and I could have looked on it long with pleasure, when suddenly I felt my arm grasped by a strong finger. I turned round, and the priest, relaxing his hold, pointed down into the dark valley below us, as he said, in a low and agitated voice, "You see the light—it is there—there." Quickening our pace by every effort, we began rapidly to descend the mountain by a zig-zag road, whose windings soon lost us the view I have mentioned, and left nothing but the wild and barren mountains around us. Tired as our poor horse was, the priest pressed him forward, and, regardless of the broken and rugged way, he seemed to think of nothing but his haste, muttering between his teeth with a low but rapid articulation, while his face grew flushed and pale at intervals, and his eye had all the lustrous glare and restless look of fever. I endeavoured, as well as I was able, to occupy my mind with other thoughts, but with that invincible fascination that turns us ever to the side we try to shun, I found myself again and again gazing on my companion's countenance. Every moment now his agitation increased ; his lips were firmly closed ; his brow contracted ; his cheek flattened, and quiver-

ing with a nervous spasm, while his hand trembled violently as he wiped the big drops of sweat that rolled in agony from his forehead.

At last we reached the level, where a better road presented itself before us, and enabled us so to increase our speed that we were rapidly coming up with the light, which, as the evening closed in, seemed larger and brighter than before. It was now that hour when the twilight seems fading into night, a grey and sombre darkness colouring every object, but yet marking grass and rock, pathway and river, with some seeming of their noonday hues, so that as we came along I could make out the roof and walls of a mud cabin built against the very mountain-side, in the gable of which the light was shining. A rapid, a momentary thought flashed across my mind as to what dreary and solitary man could fix his dwelling-place in such a spot as this, when in an instant the priest suddenly pulled up the horse, and, stretching out one hand with a gesture of listening, whispered, "Hark!—did you not hear that?" As he spoke, a cry, wild and fearful, rose through the gloomy valley —at first in one prolonged and swelling note, then broken as if by sobs, it faltered, sank, and rose again wilder and madder, till the echoes, catching up the direful sounds, answered and repeated them as though a chorus of unearthly spirits were calling to each other through the air.

"O God! too late—too late!" said the priest, as he bowed his face upon his knees, and his strong frame shook in agony. "O Father of mercy!" he cried, as he lifted his eyes, bloodshot and tearful,

toward heaven, "forgive me this—and if unshriven before Thee"— Another cry, more frantic than before, here burst upon us, and the priest, muttering with rapid utterance, appeared lost in prayer. But at him I looked no longer, for straight before us on the road, and in front of the little cabin, now not above thirty paces from us, knelt the figure of a woman, whom, were it not from the fearful sounds we had heard, one could scarcely believe a thing of life; her age not more than thirty years; she was pale as death; not a tinge, not a ray of colour streaked her bloodless cheek; her black hair, long and wild, fell upon her back and shoulders, straggling and disordered; her hands were clasped as she held her stiffened arms straight before her. Her dress bespoke the meanest poverty, and her sunk cheek and drawn-in lips betokened famine and starvation. As I gazed on her, almost breathless with awe and dread, the priest leaped out, and hurrying forward, called out to her in Irish; but she heard him not, she saw him not—dead to every sense, she remained still and motionless. No feature trembled, no limb was shaken; she knelt before us, like an image of stone; and then, as if by some spell that worked within her, once more gave forth the heart-rending cry we heard at first. Now low and plaintive, like the sighing night wind, it rose fuller and fuller, pausing and continuing at intervals, and then breaking into short and fitful efforts, it grew wilder and stronger, till at last, with one outbreak, like the overflowing of a heart of misery, it ceased abruptly.

The priest bent over her and spoke to her; he

called her by her name, and shook her several times —but all in vain.

Her spirit—if, indeed, present with her body—had lost all sympathy with things of earth.

"God help her," said he; "God comfort her! This is sore affliction."

As he spoke, he walked towards the little cabin, the door of which now stood open. All was still and silent within its wall. Unused to see the dwellings of the poor in Ireland, my eye ranged over the bare walls, the damp and earthen floor, the few and miserable pieces of furniture—when suddenly my attention was called to another and a sadder spectacle. In one corner of the hovel, stretched upon a bed, whose poverty might have made it unworthy of a dog to lie in, lay the figure of a large and powerfully-built man, stone dead. His eyes were closed, and the chin bound up with a white cloth; and a sheet, torn and ragged, was stretched above his cold limbs, while on either side of him two candles were burning. His features, though rigid and stiffened, were manly, and even handsome; the bold character of the face heightened in effect by his beard and moustache, which appeared to have been let grow for some time previous, and whose black and waving curl looked darker from the pallor around it. Some lines there were about the mouth that looked like harshness and severity, but the struggle of departing life might have caused them.

Gently withdrawing the sheet that covered him, the priest placed his hand upon his heart. It was evident to me from his manner, that he still believed him

living ; and as he rolled back the covering he felt for his hand. Suddenly starting, he fell back for an instant, and as he moved his fingers backwards and forwards, I saw that they were covered with blood. I drew near, and now perceived that the dead man's chest was laid open by a wound of several inches in extent. The ribs had been cut across, and some portion of the heart or lung seemed to protrude. At the slightest touch of the body the blood gushed forth anew, and ran in streams upon him. His right hand, too, was cut across the entire palm, the thumb nearly severed at the joint. This appeared to have been rudely bound together ; but it was evident, from the nature and size of the other wound, that he could not have survived it many hours.

As I looked in horror at the frightful spectacle before me, my foot struck at something beneath the bed. I stooped down to examine, and found it was a carbine, such as dragoons usually carry. It was broken at the stock, and bruised in many places, but still seemed not unserviceable. Part of the butt-end was also stained with blood. The clothes of the dead man, clotted and matted with gore, were also there, adding, by their terrible testimony, to the dreadful fear that haunted me. Yes, everything confirmed it—murder and crime had been there. A low, muttering sound near made me turn my head, and I saw the priest kneeling beside the bed, engaged in prayer. His head was bare, and he wore a kind of scarf of blue silk, and the small case that contained the last rites of his church were placed at his feet.

Apparently lost to all around save the figure of the

man that lay dead before him, he muttered, with ceaseless rapidity, prayer after prayer, stopping ever and anon to place his hand on the cold heart, or to listen, with his ear upon the livid lips; and then resuming with greater eagerness, while the big drops rolled from his forehead, and the agonizing torture he felt convulsed his entire frame.

"O God!" he exclaimed, after a prayer of some minutes, in which his features worked like one in a fit of epilepsy—"O God! is it, then, too late?"

He started to his feet as he spoke, and, bending over the corpse, with hands clasped above his head, he poured forth a whole torrent of words in Irish, swaying his body backwards and forwards, as his voice, becoming broken by emotion, now sunk into a whisper, or broke into a discordant shout. "Shaun! Shaun!" cried he, as, stooping down to the ground, he snatched up the little crucifix and held it before the dead man's face, at the same time he shook him violently by the shoulder, and cried, in accents I can never forget, some words aloud, among which alone I could recognise one word, Thea—the Irish word for God. He shook him till the head rocked heavily from side to side, and the blood oozed from the opening wound, and stained the ragged covering of the bed. At this instant the priest stopped suddenly, and fell upon his knees, while, with a low, faint sigh, he who seemed dead lifted his eyes and looked around him; his hands grasped the sides of the bed, and, with a strength that seemed supernatural, he raised himself to the sitting posture. His lips were parted and moved, but without a sound, and his filmy eyes

turned slowly in their sockets from one object to another, till at length they fell upon the little crucifix that had dropped from the priest's hand upon the bed. In an instant the corpse-like features seemed inspired with life—a gleam of brightness shot from his eyes—the head nodded forward a couple of times, and I thought I heard a discordant, broken sound issue from the open mouth, and, a moment after, the head dropped upon the chest, and the hands relaxed, and he fell back with a crash, never to move more.

Overcome with horror, I staggered to the door, and sank upon a little bench in front of the cabin. The cool air of the night soon brought me to myself, and, while in my confused state I wondered if the whole might not be some dreadful dream, my eyes once more fell upon the figure of the woman, who still knelt in the attitude we had first seen her. Her hands were clasped before her, and from time to time her wild cry rose into the air, and woke the echoes of that silent valley. A faint moonlight lay in broken patches around her, and mingled its beams with the red glare of the little candles within, as their light fell upon her marble features. From the cabin I could hear the sounds of the priest's voice, as he continued to pray without ceasing. As the hours rolled on nothing changed, and when, prompted by curiosity, I looked within the hovel, I saw the priest still kneeling beside the bed, his face pale and sunk and haggard, as though months of sickness and suffering had passed over him.

I dared not speak—I dared not disturb him, and I sat down near the door in silence.

It is one of the strange anomalies of our nature that the feelings which rent our hearts with agony have a tendency, by their continuance, to lull us into slumber. The watcher by the bedside of his dying friend—the felon in his cell, but a few hours before death—sleep, and sleep soundly. The bitterness of grief would seem to blunt sensation, and the mind, like the body, can only sustain a certain amount of burden, after which it succumbs and yields. So I found it amid this scene of horror and anguish, with everything to excite that can operate upon the mind—the woman stricken motionless and senseless by grief—the dead man, as it were, recalled to life by the words that were to herald him into life everlasting—the old man, whom I had known but as a gay companion, displayed now before my eyes in all the workings of his feeling heart, called up by the afflictions of one world and the terrors of another,—and this in a wild and dreary valley, far from man's dwelling. Yet, amid all this, and, more than all, the harassing conviction that some deed of blood, some dark hour of crime had been here at work, perhaps to be concealed for ever, and go unavenged, save of Heaven—and yet, with this around and about me, I slept. How long I know not; but when I woke the mist of morning hung in the valley, or rolled in masses of cloud-like vapour along the mountain-side. In an instant the whole scene of the previous night was before me, and the priest still knelt beside the bed and prayed. I looked for the woman, but she was gone.

The noise of wheels at some distance could now be heard on the mountain road, and, as I walked

stealthily from the door, I could see three figures descending the path, followed by a car and horse. As they came along, I marked that beneath the straw on the car something protruded itself on either side, and this I soon saw was a coffin. As the men approached the angle of the road they halted, and seemed to converse in an eager and anxious manner, when suddenly one of them broke from the others, and, springing to the top of a low wall that skirted the road, continued to look steadily at the house for some minutes together. The thought flashed on me at the moment that perhaps my being a stranger to them might have caused their hesitation, so I waved my hat a couple of times above my head. Upon this they resumed their march, and in a few minutes more were standing beside me. One of them, who was an old man, with hard, weather-beaten features, addressed me, first in Irish, but, correcting himself at once, asked, in a low, steady voice,—

"Was the priest in time? Did he get the rites?"

I nodded in reply; when he muttered, as if to himself,—

"God's will be done. Shaun didn't tell of Hogan"—

"Whist! father—whist!" said one of the younger men, as he laid his hand upon the old man's arm; while he added something in Irish, gesticulating with energy as he spoke.

"Is Mary come back, sir?" said the third, as he touched his hat to me respectfully.

"The woman—his wife?" said I; "I have not seen her to-day."

"She was up with us at Kiltimmon, at two o'clock this morning, but wouldn't wait for us. She wanted to get back at once, poor crayture. She bears it well, and has the stout heart. Faith, maybe before long she'll make some others faint in their hearts, that have stricken hers this night."

"Was she calm, then?" said I.

"As you are this minute; and sure enough she helped me with her own hands to put the horse in the car; for you see I couldn't lift the shaft with my one arm."

I now saw that his arm was bound up, and buttoned within the bosom of his greatcoat.

The priest now joined us, and spoke for several minutes in Irish; and although ignorant of all he said, I could mark in the tone of his voice, his look, his manner, and his gesture, that his words were those of rebuke and reprobation. The old man heard him in silence, but without any evidence of feeling. The others, on the contrary, seemed deeply affected, and the younger of the two, whose arm was broken, seemed greatly moved, and the tears rolled down his hardy cheeks.

These signs of emotion were evidently displeasing to the old man, whose nature was of a sterner and more cruel mould; and, as he turned away from the Father's admonition, he moved past me, muttering as he went,—

"Isn't it all fair?—blood for blood; and sure they dhruv him to it."

After a few words from the priest, two of the party took their spades from the car, and began digging the

grave ; while Father Loftus, leading the other aside, talked to him for some time.

"Begorra," said the old man, as he shovelled the earth to either side, "Father Tom isn't like himself, at all, at all. He used to have pity, and the kind word for the poor when they were turned out on the world to starve, without as much as a sheaf of straw to lie upon, or potatoes enough for the children to eat."

"Whisht, father, or the priest will hear ye," said the younger one, looking cautiously around.

"Sorrow bit o' me cares ; if he does, it's thruth I'm telling. You are not long in these parts, sir, av I may make so bowld ?"

"No," said I, "I'm quite a stranger."

"Well, anyhow ye may understand that this isn't a fine soil for a potato garden ; and yet the devil a other poor Shaun had, since they turned him out on the road last Michaelmas day, himself, and his wife, and the little gossoon—the only one they had, too—with a fever and hague upon him. The poor child, however, didn't feel it long, for he died ten days after. Well, well ! the ways of God there's no saying against. But sure, if the little boy didn't die, Shaun was off to America, for he tuk his passage, and got a sea-chest of a friend, and was all ready to go ; but, you see, when the child died he could not bring himself to leave the grave, and there he used to go and spend half of his days fixing it, and settling the sod about it, and wouldn't take a day's work from any of the neighbours ; and at last he went off one night, and we never knew what was become of him till a pedlar brought word that he and Mary was

living in the Cluan Beg, away from everybody, without a friend to say 'God save you!'—It's deep enough now, Mickey—there's nobody will turn him out of this. And so, sir, he might have lived for many a year; but when we heard that the boys was up, and going to settle a reckoning with Mr. Tarleton"—

"Come, now," cried the priest, who joined us at the moment, and who, from his look, I could perceive was evidently displeased at the old man's communicativeness—"come, now, the sooner you all get back the better. We must look after Mary, too, for God knows where she is wandering. And now let us put the poor boy in the earth."

With slow and sullen steps the old man entered the house, followed by the others. I did not accompany them, but stood beside the grave, my mind full of all I heard. In a few minutes they returned, carrying the coffin, one corner of which was borne by the priest himself. Their heads were bare, and their features were pale and careworn. They placed the body in the grave, and gazed down after it for some seconds. The priest spoke a few words in a low, broken voice, the very sounds of which, though their meaning was unknown to me, sunk deep into my heart. He whispered for an instant to one of the young men, who went into the cabin, and speedily returned, carrying with him some of the clothes of the deceased, and the old carbine that lay beneath the bed.

"Throw them in the grave, Mickey—throw them in," said the priest. "Where's his coat?"

"It isn't there, sir," said the man. "That's everything that has a mark of blood upon it."

"Give me that gun," cried the priest; and at the same moment he took the carbine by the end of the barrel, and by one stroke of his strong foot snapped it at the breech. "My curse be on you," said he, as he kicked the fragments into the grave; "there was peace and happiness in the land before men knew ye, and owned ye! Ah! Hugh," said he, turning his eyes fiercely on the old man, "I never said ye hadn't griefs and trials, and sore ones, too, some of them; but, God help ye, if ye think that an easy conscience and a happy home can be bought by murder." The old man started at the words, and as his dark brow lowered, and his lip trembled, I drew near to the priest, fearful lest an attack might be made on him. "Ay, murder, boys—that's the word, and no less. Don't tell me about righting yourselves, and blood for blood, and all that. There's a curse upon the land where these things happen, and the earth is not lucky that is moistened with the blood of God's creatures."

"Cover him up—cover him up!" said the old man, shovelling in the earth, so as to drown the priest's words; "and let us be going. We ought to be back by six o'clock, unless," added he, with a sarcastic bitterness that made him look like a fiend—"unless your Reverence is going to set the police on our track."

"God forgive you, Hugh, and turn your heart," said the old man, as he shook his outstretched hands at him. As he spoke these words he took me by the arm, and led me within the house. I could feel his

hand tremble as it leaned upon me, and the big tears rolled down his cheeks in silence.

We sat down in the little cabin, but neither of us spoke. After some time we heard the noise of the cart-wheels, and the sound of voices, which grew fainter and fainter as they passed up the glen, and at length all became still.

"And the poor wife," said I; "what, think you, has became of her?"

"Gone home to her people, most likely," answered the priest. "Her misfortunes will make her a home in every cabin. None so poor, none so wretched, as not to succour and shelter her. But let us hence."

We walked forth from the hovel, and the priest, closing the door after him, fastened it with a padlock that he found within, and then placing the key upon the door-sill he turned to depart — but, suddenly stopping, he took my hand in both of his, and said, in a voice of touching earnestness,—

"This has been a sad scene. Would to God you had not witnessed it. Would to God, rather, that it might not have occurred. But promise me, on the faith of a man of honour, and the word of a gentleman, that what you have seen this night you reveal to no man, until I have passed away myself, and stand before that judgment to which we all are coming."

"I promise you faithfully," said I. "And now let us leave a spot that has thrown a gloom upon my heart a lifelong will never obliterate."

THE BANSHEE.

Of all the superstitions prevalent amongst the natives of Ireland at any period, past or present, there is none so grand or fanciful, none which has been so universally assented to, or so cordially cherished, as the belief in the existence of the Banshee. There are very few, however remotely acquainted with Irish life or Irish history, but must have heard or read of the Irish banshee; still, as there are different stories and different opinions afloat respecting this strange being, I think a little explanation concerning her appearance, functions, and habits will not be unacceptable to my readers. The banshee, then, is said to be an immaterial and immortal being, attached, time out of mind, to various respectable and ancient families in Ireland, and is said always to appear to announce, by cries and lamentations, the death of any member of that family to which she belongs. She always comes at night, a short time previous to the death of the fated one, and takes her stand outside, convenient to the house, and there utters the most plaintive cries and lamentations, generally in some unknown language, and in a tone of voice resembling a human female. She continues her visits night after night, unless vexed or annoyed, until the mourned object dies, and sometimes she is said to continue about the house for several nights after. Sometimes she is said to appear

in the shape of a most beautiful young damsel, and dressed in the most elegant and fantastic garments; but her general appearance is in the likeness of a very old woman, of small stature, and bending and decrepit form, enveloped in a winding-sheet or grave-dress, and her long, white, hoary hair waving over her shoulders and descending to her feet. At other times she is dressed in the costume of the middle ages—the different articles of her clothing being of the richest material and of a sable hue. She is very shy, and easily irritated, and, when once annoyed or vexed, she flies away, and never returns during the same generation. When the death of the person whom she mourns is contingent, or to occur by unforeseen accident, she is particularly agitated and troubled in her appearance, and unusually loud and mournful in her lamentations. Some would fain have it that this strange being is actuated by a feeling quite inimical to the interests of the family which she haunts, and that she comes with joy and triumph to announce their misfortunes. This opinion, however, is rejected by most people, who imagine her their most devoted friend, and that she was, at some remote period, a member of the family, and once existed on the earth in life and loveliness. It is not every Irish family can claim the honour of an attendant banshee; they must be respectably descended, and of ancient line, to have any just pretensions to a warning spirit. However, she does not appear to be influenced by the difference of creed or clime, provided there be no other impediment, as several Protestant families of Norman and Anglo-Saxon origin boast of their own banshee; and

to this hour several noble and distinguished families in the country feel proud of the *surveillance* of that mysterious being. Neither is she influenced by the circumstances of rank or fortune, as she is oftener found frequenting the cabin of the peasant than the baronial mansion of the lord of thousands. Even the humble family to which the writer of this tale belongs has long claimed the honourable appendage of a banshee; and it may, perhaps, excite an additional interest in my readers, when I inform them that my present story is associated with her last visit to that family.

Some years ago there dwelt in the vicinity of Mountrath, in the Queen's County, a farmer, whose name for obvious reasons we shall not at present disclose. He never was married, and his only domestics were a servant boy and an old woman, a housekeeper, who had long been a follower or dependant of the family. He was born and educated in the Roman Catholic Church, but on arriving at manhood, for reasons best known to himself, he abjured the tenets of that creed, and conformed to the doctrines of Protestantism. However, in after years he seemed to waver, and refused going to church, and by his manner of living seemed to favour the dogmas of Infidelity or Atheism. He was rather dark and reserved in his manner, and oftentimes sullen and gloomy in his temper; and this, joined with his well-known disregard of religion, served to render him somewhat unpopular amongst his neighbours and acquaintances. However, he was in general respected, and was never insulted or annoyed. He

was considered as an honest, inoffensive man, and as he was well supplied with fire-arms and ammunition —in the use of which he was well practised, having, in his early days, served several years in a yeomanry corps—few liked to disturb him, even had they been so disposed. He was well educated, and decidedly hostile to every species of superstition, and was constantly jeering his old housekeeper, who was extremely superstitious, and pretended to be entirely conversant with every matter connected with witchcraft and the fairy world. He seldom darkened a neighbour's door, and scarcely ever asked any one to enter his, but generally spent his leisure hours in reading, of which he was extremely fond, or in furbishing his fire-arms, to which he was still more attached, or in listening to, and laughing at, the wild and blood-curdling stories of old Moya, with which her memory abounded. Thus he spent his time until the period at which our tale commences, when he was about fifty years of age; and old Moya, the housekeeper, had become extremely feeble, stooped, and of very ugly and forbidding exterior. One morning in the month of November, A.D. 1818, this man arose before daylight, and on coming out of the apartment where he slept, he was surprised at finding old Moya in the kitchen, sitting over the raked-up fire, and smoking her tobacco-pipe in a very serious and meditative mood.

"Arrah, Moya," said he, "what brings you out of your bed so early?"

"Och musha, I dunna," replied the old woman; "I was so uneasy all night that I could not sleep a

wink, and I got up to smoke a blast, thinkin' that it might drive away the weight that's on my heart."

"And what ails you, Moya?—are you sick, or what came over you?"

"No, the Lord be prais'd, I am not sick, but my heart is sore, and there's a load on my spirits that would kill a hundred."

"Maybe you were dreaming, or something that way," said the man in a bantering tone; and suspecting, from the old woman's grave manner, that she was labouring under some mental delusion.

"Dreaming!" re-echoed Moya, with a bitter sneer; "ay, dreaming. Och, I wish to God I was *only dreaming;* but I am very much afraid it is worse than that, and that there is trouble and misfortune hanging over uz."

"And what makes you think so, Moya?" asked he, with a half-suppressed smile.

Moya, aware of his well-known hostility to every species of superstition, remained silent, biting her lips, and shaking her grey head prophetically.

"Why don't you answer me, Moya?" again asked the man.

"Och," said Moya, "I am heart-scalded to have it to tell you, and I know you will laugh at me; but, say what you will, there is something bad over uz, for the banshee was about the house all night, and she has me almost frightened out of my wits with her shouting and bawling."

The man was aware of the banshee's having been long supposed to haunt his family, but often scouted that supposition; yet, as it was some years since he

had last heard of her visiting the place, he was not prepared for the freezing announcement of old Moya. He turned as pale as a corpse, and trembled excessively; at last, recollecting himself, he said, with a forced smile,—

"And how do you know it was the banshee, Moya?"

"How do I know?" reiterated Moya tauntingly. "Didn't I see and hear her several times during the night? and more than that, didn't I hear the 'dead-coach' rattling round the house, and through the yard, every night at midnight this week back, as if it would tear the house out of the foundation?"

The man smiled faintly; he was frightened, yet was ashamed to appear so. He again said,—

"And did you ever see the banshee before, Moya?"

"Yes," replied Moya, "often. Didn't I see her when your mother died? Didn't I see her when your brother was drowned?—and sure there wasn't one of the family that went these sixty years that I did not both see and hear her."

"And where did you see her? and what way did she look to-night?"

"I saw her at the little window, over my bed; a kind of reddish light shone round the house; I looked up, and there I saw her old, pale face and glassy eyes looking in, and she rocking herself to and fro, and clapping her little, withered hands, and crying as if her very heart would break."

"Well, Moya, it's all imagination; go, now, and prepare my breakfast, as I want to go to Maryborough to-day, and I must be home early."

Moya trembled; she looked at him imploringly, and said, "For Heaven's sake, John, don't go to-day; stay till some other day, and God bless you, for if you go to-day, I would give my oath there will something cross you that's bad."

"Nonsense, woman!" said he; "make haste and get me my breakfast."

Moya, with tears in her eyes, set about getting the breakfast ready; and whilst she was so employed, John was engaged in making preparations for his journey.

Having now completed his other arrangements, he sat down to breakfast, and, having concluded it, he arose to depart.

Moya ran to the door, crying loudly; she flung herself on her knees, and said, "John, John, be advised. Don't go to-day; take my advice; I know more of the world than you do, and I see plainly that if you go you will never enter this door again with your life.

Ashamed to be influenced by the drivellings of an old *collough*, he pushed her away with his hand, and, going out to the stable, mounted his horse, and departed. Moya followed him with her eyes whilst in sight; and when she could no longer see him, she sat down at the fire and wept bitterly.

It was a bitter cold day, and the farmer, having finished his business in town, feeling himself chilly, went into a public-house to have a tumbler of punch, and feed his horse: there he met an old friend, who would not part with him until he would have another glass with him, and a little conversation, as it was

many years since they had met before. One glass brought another, and it was almost duskish ere John thought of returning, and having nearly ten miles to travel, it would be dark night before he could get home. Still his friend would not permit him to go, but called for more liquor, and it was far advanced in the night before they parted. John, however, had a good horse, and having had him well fed, he did not spare whip or spur, but dashed along at a rapid pace through the gloom and silence of the winter's night, and had already distanced the town upwards of five miles, when, on arriving at a very desolate part of the road, a gun shot, fired from behind the bushes, put an end to his mortal existence. Two strange men, who had been at the same public-house in Maryborough drinking, observing that he had money, and learning the road that he was to travel, conspired to rob and murder him, and waylaid him in this lonely spot for that horrid purpose.

Poor Moya did not go to bed that night, but sat at the fire, every moment impatiently expecting his return. Often did she listen at the door to try if she could hear the tramp of horses' footsteps approaching; but in vain; no sound met her ear except the sad wail of the night wind, moaning fitfully through the tall bushes which surrounded the ancient dwelling, or the sullen roar of a little dark river, which wound its way through the lowlands at a small distance from where she stood. Tired with watching, at length she fell asleep on the hearthstone; but that sleep was disturbed and broken, and frightful and appalling dreams incessantly haunted her imagination.

At length the darksome morning appeared struggling through the wintry clouds, and Moya again opened the door to look out. But what was her dismay, when she found the horse standing at the stable door without his rider, and the saddle all besmeared with clotted blood. She raised the death-cry; the neighbours thronged round, and it was at once declared that the hapless man was robbed and murdered. A party on horseback immediately set forward to seek him, and on arriving at the fatal spot, he was found stretched on his back in the ditch, his head perforated with shot and slugs, and his body literally immersed in a pool of blood. On examining him, it was found that his money was gone, and a valuable gold watch and appendages abstracted from his pocket. His remains were conveyed home, and, after having been waked the customary time, were committed to the grave of his ancestors in the little green churchyard of the village.

Having no legitimate children, the nearest heir to his property was a brother, a cabinetmaker, who resided in London. A letter was accordingly despatched to the brother announcing the sad catastrophe, and calling on him to come and take possession of the property; and two men were appointed to guard the place until he should arrive.

The two men delegated to act as guardians, or, as they are technically termed, "keepers," were old friends and comrades of the deceased, and had served with him in the same yeomanry corps. Jack O'Malley was a Roman Catholic, a square, stout-built, and handsome fellow, with a pleasant word for every one, and full of that gaiety, vivacity, and *nonchalance* for

which the Roman Catholic peasantry of Ireland are so particularly distinguished. He was now about forty-five years of age; sternly attached to the dogmas of his religion, and always remarkable for his revolutionary and anti-British principles. He was brave as a lion, and never quailed before a man; but though caring so little for a *living* man, he was extremely afraid of a *dead* one, and would go ten miles out of his road at night to avoid passing a "rath," or "haunted bush." Harry Taylor, on the other hand, was a staunch Protestant; a tall, genteel-looking man, of proud and imperious aspect, and full of reserve and *hauteur*—the natural consequence of a consciousness of political and religious ascendency, and superiority of intelligence and education, which so conspicuously marked the demeanour of the Protestant peasantry of those days. Harry, too, loved his glass as well as Jack, but was of a more peaceful disposition, and, as he was well educated and intelligent, he was utterly opposed to superstition, and laughed to scorn the mere idea of ghosts, goblins, and fairies. Thus Jack and Harry were diametrically opposed to each other in every point, except their love of the *cruiskeen*, yet they never failed to seize every opportunity of being together; and although they often blackened each other's eyes in their political and religious disputes, yet their quarrels were always amicably settled, and they never found themselves happy but in each other's society.

It was now the sixth or seventh night that Jack and Harry, as usual, kept their lonely watch in the kitchen of the murdered man. A large turf fire blazed brightly

on the hearth, and on a bed of straw in the ample chimney-corner was stretched old Moya in a profound sleep. On the hearthstone, between the two friends, stood a small oak table, on which was placed a large decanter of whisky, a jug of boiled water, and a bowl of sugar; and, as if to add an idea of security to that of comfort, on one end of the table were placed in *saltier* a formidable-looking blunderbuss, and a brace of large brass pistols. Jack and his comrade perpetually renewed their acquaintance with the whisky bottle, and laughed, and chatted, and recounted the adventures of their young days with as much hilarity as if the house which now witnessed their mirth never echoed to the cry of death or blood. In the course of conversation, Jack mentioned the incident of the strange appearance of the banshee, and expressed a hope that she would not come that night to disturb their carouse.

"Banshee the devil," shouted Harry; "how superstitious you papists are! I would like to see the phiz of any man, dead or alive, who dare make his appearance here to-night;" and seizing the blunderbuss, and looking wickedly at Jack, he vociferated, "By Hercules, I would drive the contents of this through their sowls who dare annoy us."

"Better for you shoot your mother than fire at the banshee, anyhow," remarked Jack.

"Psha!" said Harry, looking contemptuously at his companion, "I would think no more of riddling the old Jade's hide than I would of throwing off this tumbler;" and to suit the action to the word, he drained off another bumper of whisky punch.

"Jack," says Harry, "now that we are in such prime humour, will you give us a song?"

"With all the veins of my heart," says Jack; "what will it be?"

"Anything you please; your will must be my pleasure," answered Harry.

Jack, after coughing and clearing his pipes, chanted forth, in a bold and musical voice, a rude rigmarole, called "The Royal Blackbird," which, although of no intrinsic merit, yet, as it expressed sentiments hostile to British connection and British government, and favourable to the house of Stewart, was very popular amongst the Catholic peasantry of Ireland, whilst, on the contrary, it was looked upon by the Protestants as highly offensive and disloyal. Harry, however, wished his companion too well to oppose the song, and he quietly awaited its conclusion.

"Bravo, Jack," said Harry, as soon as the song was ended; "that you may never lose your wind."

"In the king's name now I board you for another song," says Jack.

Harry, without hesitation, recognised his friends right to demand a return, and he instantly trolled forth in a deep, sweet, and sonorous voice, the following

SONG.

Ho, boys, I have a song divine!
Come let us now in concert join,
And toast the bonny banks of Boyne—
The Boyne of "Glorious" Memory."

On Boyne's famed banks our fathers bled ;
Boyne's surges with their blood ran red;
And from the Boyne our foemen fled—
Intolerance, chains, and slavery.

Dark superstition's blood-stained sons
Pressed on, but "crack" went William's guns,
And soon the gloomy monster runs—
Fell, hydra-headed bigotry.

Then fill your glasses high and fair,
Let shouts of triumph rend the air,
Whilst Georgy fills the regal chair
We'll never bow to Popery.

Jack, whose countenance had, from the commencement of the song, indicated his aversion to the sentiments it expressed, now lost all patience at hearing his darling "Popery" impugned, and seizing one of the pistols which lay on the table, and whirling it over his comrade's head, swore vehemently that he would "fracture his skull if he did not instantly drop that blackguard Orange lampoon."

"Aisy, avhic," said Harry, quietly pushing away the upraised arm ; "I did not oppose your bit of treason a while ago, and besides, the latter end of *my* song is more calculated to please you than to irritate your feelings."

Jack seemed pacified, and Harry continued his strain.

And fill a bumper to the brim—
A flowing one—and drink to him
Who, let the world go sink or swim,
Would arm for Britain's liberty.

No matter what may be his hue,
Or black, or white, or green, or blue,
Or Papist, Paynim, or Hindoo,
We'll drink to him right cordially.

Jack was so pleased with the friendly turn which the latter part of Harry's song took, that he joyfully stretched out his hand, and even joined in chorus to the concluding stanza.

The fire had now decayed on the hearth, the whisky bottle was almost emptied, and the two sentinels getting drowsy, put out the candle and laid down their heads to slumber. The song, and the laugh, and the jest were now hushed, and no sound was to be heard but the incessant click, click of the clock in the inner room, and the deep, heavy breathing of old Moya in the chimney-corner.

They had slept they knew not how long, when the old hag awakened with a wild shriek. She jumped out of bed, and crouched between the men; they started up, and asked her what had happened.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "the banshee, the banshee! Lord have mercy on us! she is come again, and I never heard her so wild and outrageous before."

Jack O'Malley readily believed old Moya's tale; so did Harry, but he thought it might be some one who was committing some depredation on the premises. They both listened attentively, but could hear nothing; they opened the kitchen door, but all was still; they looked abroad, it was a fine, calm night, and myriads of twinkling stars were burning in the deep-blue heavens. They proceeded around the yard and hay-yard; but all was calm and lonely, and no sound

saluted their ears but the shrill barking of some neighbouring cur, or the sluggish murmuring of the little, tortuous river in the distance. Satisfied that "all was right," they again went in, replenished the expiring fire, and sat down to finish whatever still remained in the whisky bottle.

They had not sat many minutes, when a wild, unearthly cry was heard without.

"The banshee again," said Moya faintly. Jack O'Malley's soul sunk within him; Harry startled up and seized the blunderbuss; Jack caught his arm, "No, no, Harry, you shall not; sit down—there's no fear—nothing will happen us."

Harry sat down, but still gripped the blunderbuss, and Jack lit his tobacco-pipe. Whilst the old woman was on her knees, striking her breast, and repeating her prayers with great vehemence.

The sad cry was again heard, louder and fiercer than before. It now seemed to proceed from the window, and again it appeared as if issuing from the door. At times it would seem as if coming from afar, whilst again it would appear as if coming down the chimney, or springing from the ground beneath their feet. Sometimes the cry resembled the low, plaintive wail of a female in distress; and in a moment, it was raised to a prolonged yell, loud and furious, and as if coming from a thousand throats; now the sound resembled a low, melancholy chant, and then was quickly changed to a loud, broken, demoniac laugh. It continued thus, with little intermission, for about a quarter of an hour, when it died away, and was succeeded by a heavy, creaking sound as if of some

large waggon, amidst which the loud tramp of horses' footsteps might be distinguished, accompanied with a strong, rushing wind. This strange noise proceeded round and round the house two or three times, then went down the lane which led to the road, and was heard no more. Jack O'Malley stood aghast, and Harry Taylor, with all his philosophy and scepticism, was astonished and frightened.

"A dreadful night this, Moya," said Jack.

"Yes," said she, "that is the dead-coach; I often heard it before, and have sometimes seen it."

"Seen, did you say?" said Harry; "pray describe it."

"Why," replied the old crone, "it's like any other coach, but twice as big, and hung over with black cloth and a black coffin on the top of it, and drawn by headless, black horses."

"Heaven protect us!" ejaculated Jack.

"It is very strange," remarked Harry.

"But," continued Moya, "it always comes before the death of a person, and I wonder what brought it now, unless it came with the banshee."

"Maybe its coming for you," said Harry, with an arch, yet subdued, smile.

"No, no," she said; "I am none of that family at all at all."

A solemn silence now ensued for a few minutes, and they thought all was vanished, when again the dreadful cry struck heavily on their ears.

"Open the door, Jack," said Harry, "and put out Hector."

Hector was a large and very ferocious mastiff,

belonging to Jack O'Malley, and always accompanied him wherever he went.

Jack opened the door, and attempted to put out the dog; but the poor animal refused to go, and as his master attempted to force him, howled in a loud and mournful tone.

"You must go," said Harry, and he caught him in his arms and flung him over the half-door. The poor dog was scarcely on the ground when he was whirled aloft into the air by some invisible power, and he fell again to earth lifeless, and the pavement was besmeared with his entrails and blood.

Harry now lost all patience, and again seizing his blunderbuss, he exclaimed, "Come, Jack, my boy, take your pistols and follow me; I have but one life to lose, and I will venture it to have a crack at this infernal demon."

"I will follow you to death's doors," said Jack; "but I would not fire at the banshee for a million of worlds."

Moya seized Harry by the skirts. "Don't go out," she cried; "let her alone while she lets you alone, for an hour's luck never shone on any one that ever molested the banshee."

"Psha! woman," said Harry, and he pushed away poor Moya contemptuously.

The two men now sallied forth; the wild cry still continued, and it seemed to issue from amongst some stacks in the hay-yard behind the house. They went round and paused; again they heard the cry, and Harry elevated his blunderbuss.

"Don't fire," said Jack.

Harry replied not; he looked scornfully at Jack;

then put his finger on the trigger, and—bang—away it exploded with a thundering sound. An extraordinary scream was now heard ten times louder and more terrific than they heard before. Their hair stood erect on their heads, and huge, round drops of sweat ran down their faces in quick succession. A glare of reddish blue light shone around the stacks; the rumbling of the "death-coach" was again heard coming; it drove up to the house, drawn by six headless, sable horses, and the figure of a withered old hag, encircled with blue flame, was seen running nimbly across the hay-yard. She entered the ominous carriage, and it drove away with a horrible sound. It swept through the tall bushes which surrounded the house; and as it disappeared, the old hag cast a thrilling scowl at the two men, and waved her fleshless arms at them vengefully. It was soon lost to sight; but the unearthly creaking of the wheels, the tramping of the horses, and the appalling cries of the banshee, continued to assail their ears for a considerable time after all had vanished.

The brave fellows now returned to the house; they again made fast the door, and reloaded their arms. Nothing, however, came to disturb them that night, nor from that time forward; and the arrival of the dead man's brother from London, in a few days after, relieved them from their irksome task.

Old Moya did not live long after; she declined from that remarkable night, and her remains were decently interred in the churchyard, adjoining the last earthly tenement of the loved family to which she had been so long and so faithfully attached.

The insulted banshee has never since returned ; and although several members of that family have since closed their mortal career, still the warning cry was never given ; and it is supposed that the injured spirit will never visit her ancient haunts, until every one of the existing generation shall have "slept with their fathers."

Jack O'Malley and his friend Harry lived some years after. Their friendship still continued undiminished like "Tam O'Shanter" and "Souter Johnny," they still continued to love each other like "a very brither," and like that jovial pair also, our two comrades were often "fou for weeks thegither ;" and often over their *cruiskeen* would they laugh at their strange adventure with the banshee. It is now, however, all over with them too ; their race is run, and they are now "tenants of the tomb."

LEGENDS OF THE BANSHEE.

By T. Crofton Croker, Esq.

The family of MacCarthy have for some generations possessed a small estate in the county of Tipperary. They are the descendants of a race once numerous and powerful in the south of Ireland; and though it is probable that the property they at present hold is no part of the large possessions of their ancestors, yet the district in which they live is so connected with the name of MacCarthy by those associations which are never forgotten in Ireland, that they have preserved with all ranks a sort of influence much greater than that which their fortune or connections could otherwise give them. They are, like most of this class, of the Roman Catholic persuasion, to which they adhere with somewhat of the pride of ancestry, blended with a something, call it what you will, whether bigotry, or a sense of wrong, arising out of repeated diminutions of their family possessions, during the more rigorous periods of the penal laws. Being an old family, and especially being an old Catholic family, they have of course their banshee; and the circumstances under which the appearance, which I shall relate, of this mysterious harbinger of evil took place, were told me by an old lady, a near connection of theirs, who knew many of the parties concerned, and who, though not deficient

in understanding or education, cannot to this day be brought to give a decisive opinion as to the truth or authenticity of the story. The plain inference to be drawn from this is, that she believes it, though she does not own it; and as she was a contemporary of the persons concerned, as she heard the account from many persons about the same period, all concurring in the important particulars, as some of her authorities were themselves actors in the scene, and as none of the parties were interested in speaking what was false,—I think we have about as good evidence that the whole is undeniably true as we have of many narratives of modern history which I could name, and which many grave and sober-minded people would deem it very great pyrrhonism to question. This, however, is a point which it is not my province to determine. People who deal out stories of this sort must be content to act like certain young politicians, who tell very freely to their friends what they hear at a great man's table; not guilty of the impertinence of weighing the doctrines, but leaving it to their hearers to understand them in any sense, or in no sense, just as they may please.

Charles MacCarthy was, in the year 1749, the only surviving son of a very numerous family. His father died when he was little more than twenty, leaving him the MacCarthy estate, not much encumbered, considering that it was an Irish one. Charles was gay, handsome, unfettered either by poverty, a father, or guardians, and therefore was not, at the age of one-and-twenty, a pattern of regularity and virtue.

In plain terms, he was an exceedingly dissipated—I fear I may say, debauched young man. His companions were, as may be supposed, of the higher classes of the youth in his neighbourhood, and, in general, of those whose fortunes were larger than his own, whose dispositions to pleasure were therefore under still less restrictions, and in whose example he found at once an incentive and an apology for his irregularities. Besides, Ireland, a place to this day not very remarkable for the coolness and steadiness of its youth, was then one of the cheapest countries in the world in most of those articles which money supplies for the indulgence of the passions. The odious exciseman,—with his portentous book in one hand, his unrelenting pen held in the other, or stuck beneath his hatband, and the ink bottle ("black emblem of the informer") dangling from his waistcoat-button,—went not then from ale-house to ale-house, denouncing all those patriotic dealers in spirits, who preferred selling whisky which had nothing to do with English laws (but to elude them), to retailing that poisonous liquor which derived its name from the British "Parliament" that compelled its circulation among a reluctant people. Or if the gauger—recording angel of the law—wrote down the peccadillo of a publican, he dropped a tear upon the word, and blotted it out for ever! For, welcome to the tables of their hospitable neighbours, the guardians of the excise, where they existed at all, scrupled to abridge those luxuries which they freely shared; and thus the competition in the market between the smuggler, who incurred

little hazard, and the personage ycleped fair trader, who enjoyed little protection, made Ireland a land flowing, not merely with milk and honey, but with whisky and wine. In the enjoyments supplied by these, and in the many kindred pleasures to which frail youth is but too prone, Charles MacCarthy indulged to such a degree, that just about the time when he had completed his four-and-twentieth year, after a week of great excesses, he was seized with a violent fever, which, from its malignity, and the weakness of his frame, left scarcely a hope of his recovery. His mother, who had at first made many efforts to check his vices, and at last had been obliged to look on at his rapid progress to ruin in silent despair, watched day and night at his pillow. The anguish of parental feeling was blended with that still deeper misery which those only know who have striven hard to rear in virtue and piety a beloved and favourite child; have found him grow up all that their hearts could desire, until he reached manhood; and then, when their pride was highest, and their hopes almost ended in the fulfilment of their fondest expectations, have seen this idol of their affections plunge headlong into a course of reckless profligacy, and, after a rapid career of vice, hang upon the verge of eternity, without the leisure or the power of repentance. Fervently she prayed that, if his life could not be spared, at least the delirium, which continued with increasing violence from the first few hours of his disorder, might vanish before death, and leave enough of light and of calm for making his peace with offended Heaven. After

several days, however, nature seemed quite exhausted, and he sunk into a state too like death to be mistaken for the repose of sleep. His face had that pale, glossy, marble look, which is in general so sure a symptom that life has left its tenement of clay. His eyes were closed and sunk, the lids having that compressed and stiffened appearance which seemed to indicate that some friendly hand had done its last office. The lips, half closed and perfectly ashy, discovered just so much of the teeth as to give to the features of death their most ghastly, but most impressive look. He lay upon his back, with his hands stretched beside him, quite motionless; and his distracted mother, after repeated trials, could discover not the least symptom of animation. The medical man who attended, having tried the usual modes for ascertaining the presence of life, declared at last his opinion that it was flown, and prepared to depart from the house of mourning. His horse was seen to come to the door. A crowd of people who were collected before the windows, or scattered in groups on the lawn in front, gathered around when the door opened. These were tenants, fosterers, and poor relations of the family, with others attracted by affection, or by that interest which partakes of curiosity, but is something more, and which collects the lower ranks round a house where a human being is in his passage to another world. They saw the professional man come out from the hall door and approach his horse; and while slowly, and with a melancholy air, he prepared to mount, they clustered round him with inquiring and wistful

looks. Not a word was spoken, but their meaning could not be misunderstood; and the physician, when he had got into his saddle, and while the servant was still holding the bridle, as if to delay him, and was looking anxiously at his face as if expecting that he would relieve the general suspense, shook his head, and said in a low voice, "It's all over, James;" and moved slowly away. The moment he had spoken, the women present, who were very numerous, uttered a shrill cry, which, having been sustained for about half a minute, fell suddenly into a full, loud, continued, and discordant but plaintive wailing, above which occasionally were heard the deep sounds of a man's voice, sometimes in broken sobs, sometimes in more distinct exclamations of sorrow. This was Charles's foster-brother, who moved about the crowd, now clapping his hands, now rubbing them together in an agony of grief. The poor fellow had been Charles's playmate and companion when a boy, and afterwards his servant; had always been distinguished by his peculiar regard, and loved his young master as much, at least, as he did his own life.

When Mrs. MacCarthy became convinced that the blow was indeed struck, and that her beloved son was sent to his last account, even in the blossoms of his sin, she remained for some time gazing with fixedness upon his cold features; then, as if something had suddenly touched the string of her tenderest affections, tear after tear trickled down her cheeks, pale with anxiety and watching. Still she continued looking at her son, apparently unconscious that she

was weeping, without once lifting her handkerchief to her eyes, until reminded of the sad duties which the custom of the country imposed upon her, by the crowd of females belonging to the better class of the peasantry who now, crying audibly, nearly filled the apartment. She then withdrew, to give directions for the ceremony of *waking*, and for supplying the numerous visitors of all ranks with the refreshments usual on these melancholy occasions. Though her voice was scarcely heard, and though no one saw her but the servants and one or two old followers of the family, who assisted her in the necessary arrangements, everything was conducted with the greatest regularity; and though she made no effort to check her sorrows, they never once suspended her attention, now more than ever required to preserve order in her household, which, in this season of calamity, but for her would have been all confusion.

The night was pretty far advanced; the boisterous lamentations which had prevailed during part of the day in and about the house had given place to a solemn and mournful stillness; and Mrs. MacCarthy, whose heart, notwithstanding her long fatigue and watching, was yet too sore for sleep, was kneeling in fervent prayer in a chamber adjoining that of her son;—suddenly her devotions were disturbed by an unusual noise, proceeding from the persons who were watching round the body. First there was a low murmur, then all was silent, as if the movements of those in the chamber were checked by a sudden panic, and then a loud cry of terror burst from all within: the door of the chamber was thrown open,

and all who were not overturned in the press rushed wildly into the passage which led to the stairs, and into which Mrs. MacCarthy's room opened. Mrs. MacCarthy made her way through the crowd into her son's chamber, where she found him sitting up in the bed, and looking vacantly around, like one risen from the grave. The glare thrown upon his sunk features and thin lathy frame gave an unearthly horror to his whole aspect. Mrs. MacCarthy was a woman of some firmness; but she was a woman, and not quite free from the superstitions of her country. She dropped on her knees, and, clasping her hands, began to pray aloud. The form before her moved only its lips, and barely uttered, "Mother;" but though the pale lips moved, as if there was a design to finish the sentence, the tongue refused its office. Mrs. MacCarthy sprung forward, and, catching the arm of her son, exclaimed, "Speak! in the name of God and His saints, speak! are you alive?"

He turned to her slowly, and said, speaking still with apparent difficulty, "Yes, my mother, alive, and—but sit down and collect yourself; I have that to tell which will astonish you still more than what you have seen." He leaned back upon his pillow, and while his mother remained kneeling by the bedside, holding one of his hands clasped in hers, and gazing on him with the look of one who distrusted all her senses, he proceeded: "Do not interrupt me until I have done. I wish to speak while the excitement of returning life is upon me, as I know I shall soon need much repose. Of the commencement of

my illness I have only a confused recollection; but within the last twelve hours I have been before the judgment-seat of God. Do not stare incredulously on me—'tis as true as have been my crimes, and as, I trust, shall be repentance. I saw the awful Judge arrayed in all the terrors which invest Him when mercy gives place to justice. The dreadful pomp of offended Omnipotence, I saw,—I remember. It is fixed here; printed on my brain in characters indelible; but it passeth human language. What I *can* describe I *will*—I may speak it briefly. It is enough to say, I was weighed in the balance and found wanting. The irrevocable sentence was upon the point of being pronounced; the eye of my Almighty Judge, which had already glanced upon me, half spoke my doom; when I observed the guardian saint, to whom you so often directed my prayers when I was a child, looking at me with an expression of benevolence and compassion. I stretched forth my hands to him, and besought his intercession; I implored that one year, one month, might be given to me on earth to do penance and atonement for my transgressions. He threw himself at the feet of my Judge, and supplicated for mercy. Oh! never—not if I should pass through ten thousand successive states of being—never, for eternity, shall I forget the horrors of that moment, when my fate hung suspended—when an instant was to decide whether torments unutterable were to be my portion for endless ages! But Justice suspended its decree, and Mercy spoke in accents of firmness, but mildness, 'Return to that world in which thou hast lived but to outrage the

laws of Him who made that world and thee. Three years are given thee for repentance; when these are ended, thou shalt again stand here, to be saved or lost for ever.' I heard no more; I saw no more, until I awoke to life, the moment before you entered."

Charles's strength continued just long enough to finish these last words, and, on uttering them, he closed his eyes, and lay quite exhausted. His mother, though, as was before said, somewhat disposed to give credit to supernatural visitations, yet hesitated whether or not she should believe that, although awakened from a swoon which might have been the crisis of his disease, he was still under the influence of delirium. Repose, however, was at all events necessary, and she took immediate measures that he should enjoy it undisturbed. After some hours' sleep he awoke refreshed, and thenceforward gradually but steadily recovered.

Still he persisted in his account of the vision, as he had at first related it; and his persuasion of its reality had an obvious and decided influence on his habits and conduct. He did not altogether abandon the society of his former associates, for his temper was not soured by his reformation; but he never joined in their excesses, and often endeavoured to reclaim them. How his pious exertions succeeded, I have never learnt; but of himself it is recorded that he was religious without ostentation, and temperate without austerity; giving a practical proof that vice may be exchanged for virtue, without a loss of respectability, popularity, or happiness.

Time rolled on, and long before the three years were ended the story of his vision was forgotten, or, when spoken of, was usually mentioned as an instance proving the folly of believing in such things. Charles's health, from the temperance and regularity of his habits, became more robust than ever. His friends, indeed, had often occasion to rally him upon a seriousness and abstractedness of demeanour, which grew upon him as he approached the completion of his seven-and-twentieth year, but for the most part his manner exhibited the same animation and cheerfulness for which he had always been remarkable. In company he evaded every endeavour to draw from him a distinct opinion on the subject of the supposed prediction; but among his own family it was well known that he still firmly believed it. However, when the day had nearly arrived on which the prophecy was, if at all, to be fulfilled, his whole appearance gave such promise of a long and healthy life, that he was persuaded by his friends to ask a large party to an entertainment at Spring House, to celebrate his birthday. But the occasion of this party, and the circumstances which attended it, will be best learned from a perusal of the following letters, which have been carefully preserved by some relations of his family. The first is from Mrs. MacCarthy to a lady, a very near connection and valued friend of hers, who lived in the county of Cork, at about fifty miles' distance from Spring House.

"TO MRS. BARRY, CASTLE BARRY.

"*Spring House, Tuesday Morning,*
"*October* 15*th*, 1752.

"MY DEAREST MARY,

"I am afraid I am going to put your affection for your old friend and kinswoman to a severe trial. A two days' journey at this season, over bad roads and through a troubled country, it will indeed require friendship such as yours to persuade a sober woman to encounter. But the truth is, I have, or fancy I have, more than usual cause for wishing you near me. You know my son's story. I can't tell you how it is, but as next Sunday approaches, when the prediction of his dream or his vision will be proved false or true, I feel a sickening of the heart, which I cannot suppress, but which your presence, my dear Mary, will soften, as it has done so many of my sorrows. My nephew, James Ryan, is to be married to Jane Osborne (who, you know, is my son's ward), and the bridal entertainment will take place here on Sunday next, though Charles pleaded hard to have it postponed a day or two longer. Would to God—but no more of this till we meet. Do prevail upon yourself to leave your good man for *one* week, if his farming concerns will not admit of his accompanying you; and come to us, with the girls, as soon before Sunday as you can.

"Ever my dear Mary's attached cousin and friend,

"ANN MACCARTHY."

Although this letter reached Castle Barry early on Wednesday, the messenger having travelled on foot over bog and moor, by paths impassable to horse or carriage, Mrs. Barry, who at once determined on going, had so many arrangements to make for the regulation of her domestic affairs (which, in Ireland, among the middle orders of the gentry, fall soon into confusion when the mistress of the family is away), that she and her two younger daughters were unable to leave until late on the morning of Friday. The eldest daughter remained to keep her father company, and superintend the concerns of the household. As the travellers were to journey in an open one-horse vehicle, called a jaunting-car (still used in Ireland), and as the roads, bad at all times, were rendered still worse by the heavy rains, it was their design to make two easy stages; to stop about midway the first night, and reach Spring House early on Saturday evening. This arrangement was now altered, as they found that from the lateness of their departure they could proceed, at the utmost, no farther than twenty miles on the first day; and they therefore purposed sleeping at the house of a Mr. Bourke, a friend of theirs, who lived at somewhat less than that distance from Castle Barry. They reached Mr. Bourke's in safety, after rather a disagreeable drive. What befell them on their journey the next day to Spring House, and after their arrival there, is fully recounted in a letter from the second Miss Barry to her eldest sister.

"*Spring House, Sunday Evening,*
"*20th October* 1752.

"DEAR ELLEN,

"As my mother's letter, which encloses this, will announce to you briefly the sad intelligence which I shall here relate more fully, I think it better to go regularly through the recital of the extraordinary events of the last two days.

"The Bourkes kept us up so late on Friday night that yesterday was pretty far advanced before we could begin our journey, and the day closed when we were nearly fifteen miles distant from this place. The roads were excessively deep, from the heavy rains of the last week, and we proceeded so slowly that, at last, my mother resolved on passing the night at the house of Mr. Bourke's brother (who lives about a quarter of a mile off the road), and coming here to breakfast in the morning. The day had been windy and showery, and the sky looked fitful, gloomy, and uncertain. The moon was full, and at times shone clear and bright; at others it was wholly concealed behind the thick black and rugged masses of clouds that rolled rapidly along, and were every moment becoming larger, and collecting together as if gathering strength for a coming storm. The wind, which blew in our faces, whistled bleakly along the low hedges of the narrow road, on which we proceeded with difficulty from the number of deep sloughs, and which afforded not the least shelter, no plantation being within some miles of us. My mother, therefore, asked Leary, who drove the jaunting-car, how far we were from Mr. Bourke's. "'Tis about ten

spades from this to the cross, and we have then only to turn to the left into the avenue, ma'am.' 'Very well, Leary; turn up to Mr. Bourke's as soon as you reach the cross roads.' My mother had scarcely spoken these words, when a shriek, that made us thrill as if our very hearts were pierced by it, burst from the hedge to the right of our way. If it resembled anything earthly, it seemed the cry of a female, struck by a sudden and mortal blow, and giving out her life in one long, deep pang of expiring agony. 'Heaven defend us!' exclaimed my mother. 'Go you over the hedge, Leary, and save that woman, if she is not yet dead, while we run back to the hut we just passed, and alarm the village near it.' 'Woman!' said Leary, beating the horse violently, while his voice trembled, 'that's no woman; the sooner we get on, ma'am, the better;' and he continued his efforts to quicken the horse's pace. We saw nothing. The moon was hid. It was quite dark, and we had been for some time expecting a heavy fall of rain. But just as Leary had spoken, and had succeeded in making the horse trot briskly forward, we distinctly heard a loud clapping of hands, followed by a succession of screams, that seemed to denote the last excess of despair and anguish, and to issue from a person running forward inside the hedge, to keep pace with our progress. Still we saw nothing; until, when we were within about ten yards of the place where an avenue branched off to Mr. Bourke's to the left, and the road turned to Spring House on the right, the moon started suddenly from behind a cloud and enabled us to see, as plainly

as I now see this paper, the figure of a tall thin woman, with uncovered head, and long hair that floated round her shoulders, attired in something which seemed either a loose white cloak or a sheet thrown hastily about her. She stood on the corner hedge, where the road on which we were met that which leads to Spring House, with her face towards us, her left hand pointing to this place, and her right arm waving rapidly and violently, as if to draw us on in that direction. The horse had stopped, apparently frightened at the sudden presence of the figure, which stood in the manner I have described, still uttering the same piercing cries, for about half a minute. It then leaped upon the road, disappeared from our view for one instant, and the next was seen standing upon a high wall a little way up the avenue on which we purposed going, still pointing towards the road to Spring House, but in an attitude of defiance and command, as if prepared to oppose our passage up the avenue. The figure was now quite silent, and its garments, which had before flown loosely in the wind, were closely wrapped around it. 'Go on, Leary, to Spring House, in God's name!' said my mother; 'whatever world it belongs to, we will provoke it no longer.' ''Tis the banshee, ma'am,' said Leary; 'and I would not, for what my life is worth, go anywhere this blessed night but to Spring House. But I'm afraid there's something bad going forward, or *she* would not send us there.' So saying, he drove forward; and as we turned on the road to the right, the moon suddenly withdrew its light, and we saw the apparition no more; but we heard plainly a prolonged

clapping of hands, gradually dying away, as if it issued from a person rapidly retreating. We proceeded as quickly as the badness of the roads and the fatigue of the poor animal that drew us would allow, and arrived here about eleven o'clock last night. The scene which awaited us you have learned from my mother's letter. To explain it fully, I must recount to you some of the transactions which took place here during the last week.

"You are aware that Jane Osborne was to have been married this day to James Ryan, and that they and their friends have been here for the last week. On Tuesday last, the very day on the morning of which cousin MacCarthy despatched the letter inviting us here, the whole of the company were walking about the grounds a little before dinner. It seems that an unfortunate creature, who had been seduced by James Ryan, was seen prowling in the neighbourhood in a moody, melancholy state for some days previous. He had separated from her for several months, and, they say, had provided for her rather handsomely; but she had been seduced by the promise of his marrying her; and the shame of her unhappy condition, uniting with disappointment and jealousy, had disordered her intellects. During the whole forenoon of this Tuesday she had been walking in the plantations near Spring House, with her cloak folded tight round her, the hood nearly covering her face; and she had avoided conversing with or even meeting any of the family.

"Charles MacCarthy, at the time I mentioned, was walking between James Ryan and another, at a

little distance from the rest, on a gravel path, skirting a shrubbery. The whole party were thrown into the utmost consternation by the report of a pistol, fired from a thickly planted part of the shrubbery which Charles and his companions had just passed. He fell instantly, and it was found that he had been wounded in the leg. One of the party was a medical man; his assistance was immediately given, and, on examining, he declared that the injury was very slight, that no bone was broken, that it was merely a flesh wound, and that it would certainly be well in a few days. 'We shall know more by Sunday,' said Charles, as he was carried to his chamber. His wound was immediately dressed, and so slight was the inconvenience which it gave, that several of his friends spent a portion of the evening in his apartment.

"On inquiry, it was found that the unlucky shot was fired by the poor girl just mentioned. It was also manifest that she had aimed, not at Charles, but at the destroyer of her innocence and happiness, who was walking beside him. After a fruitless search for her through the grounds, she walked into the house of her own accord, laughing and dancing and singing wildly, and every moment exclaiming that she had at last killed Mr. Ryan. When she heard that it was Charles, and not Mr. Ryan, who was shot, she fell into a violent fit, out of which, after working convulsively for some time, she sprung to the door, escaped from the crowd that pursued her, and could never be taken until last night, when she was brought here, perfectly frantic, a little before our arrival.

"Charles's wound was thought of such little consequence that the preparations went forward, as usual, for the wedding entertainment on Sunday. But on Friday night he grew restless and feverish, and on Saturday (yesterday) morning felt so ill that it was deemed necessary to obtain additional medical advice. Two physicians and a surgeon met in consultation about twelve o'clock in the day, and the dreadful intelligence was announced, that unless a change, hardly hoped for, took place before night, death must happen within twenty-four hours after. The wound, it seems, had been too tightly bandaged, and otherwise injudiciously treated. The physicians were right in their anticipations. No favourable symptom appeared, and long before we reached Spring House every ray of hope had vanished. The scene we witnessed on our arrival would have wrung the heart of a demon. We heard briefly at the gate that Mr. Charles was upon his death-bed. When we reached the house, the information was confirmed by the servant who opened the door. But just as we entered we were horrified by the most appalling screams issuing from the staircase. My mother thought she heard the voice of poor Mrs. MacCarthy, and sprung forward. We followed, and on ascending a few steps of the stairs we found a young woman, in a state of frantic passion, struggling furiously with two men-servants, whose united strength was hardly sufficient to prevent her rushing upstairs over the body of Mrs. MacCarthy, who was lying in strong hysterics upon the steps. This, I afterwards discovered, was the unhappy girl I before described,

who was attempting to gain access to Charles's room, to 'get his forgiveness,' as she said, 'before he went away to accuse her for having killed him.' This wild idea was mingled with another, which seemed to dispute with the former possession of her mind. In one sentence she called on Charles to forgive her, in the next she would denounce James Ryan as the murderer both of Charles and her. At length she was torn away; and the last words I heard her scream were, 'James Ryan, 'twas you killed him, and not I—'twas you killed him, and not I.'

"Mrs. MacCarthy, on recovering, fell into the arms of my mother, whose presence seemed a great relief to her. She wept—the first tears, I was told, that she had shed since the fatal accident. She conducted us to Charles's room, who, she said, had desired to see us the moment of our arrival, as he found his end approaching, and wished to devote the last hours of his existence to uninterrupted prayer and meditation. We found him perfectly calm, resigned, and even cheerful. He spoke of the awful event which was at hand with courage and confidence, and treated it as a doom for which he had been preparing ever since his former remarkable illness, and which he never once doubted was truly foretold to him. He bade us farewell with the air of one who was about to travel a short and easy journey: and we left him with impressions which, notwithstanding all their anguish, will, I trust, never entirely forsake us.

"Poor Mrs. MacCarthy;—but I am just called away. There seems a slight stir in the family; perhaps"—

The above letter was never finished. The enclosure to which it more than once alludes told the sequel briefly, and it is all that I have further learned of the family of MacCarthy. Before the sun had gone down upon Charles's seven-and-twentieth birthday, his soul had gone to render its last account to its Creator.

THE FACTION FIGHTS.

(*From "Ireland, its Scenery, Character," etc.*)

By Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall.

Quarrels descended from father to son. There was scarcely a district in Ireland that did not recognise some hereditary dispute; and it became a sort of duty for a member of one family to insult the member of another family, whenever they chanced to meet. Every relation of each, no matter how distant, was expected to "stand by his faction;" and times and places were regularly appointed where they might meet to "fight it out;" the majority of the combatants in nine cases out of ten being utterly ignorant what they were fighting for, and the leaders being very seldom acquainted with the original cause of the quarrel.

The magistrates were, generally, totally unable to interrupt a fight when it had begun, and usually failed to prevent it after the arrangements for it had been made; and we have more than once seen a parish priest—respected and beloved by his flock—labouring as vainly to establish peace among them as if he talked to so many stocks or stones.

Many years have passed since we witnessed one of those disgusting scenes. Unhappily, with their brutality and cruelty was frequently mixed up so much fun and humour and physical courage, that

their revolting character was not immediately perceptible, although generosity was a rare ingredient in a fight, and women too frequently mingled in it. We must observe, however, that, in the most ferocious encounter, a woman was seldom struck—we might also go the length of saying, never—except by accident. We recollect seeing one of "the gentler sex" striking right and left with a terrific weapon—a huge stone in a stocking-foot—and noting several men knocked down by her blows without either of them aiming at her a single one in return. It used to amaze us that more lives were not lost in such contests; but a man was frequently saved in consequence of the number of his adversaries, all beating at him with their sticks, which generally interfered so much with each other that few of the blows reached him. We call to mind one fair in particular; it took place in the vicinity of Ballydehob, about thirty miles west of the county of Cork, and at a time when there was little dread of interruption. We shall endeavour to describe it—briefly, however, for the subject is not pleasant, and, now, cannot be useful—with the "introductory scene." Towards the afternoon of a fine spring day, the rival factions began to assemble—each armed with his stout shillalah. The leaders parleyed somewhat before they began—not a very frequent course; they were surrounded by women and children; and an old hag seemed determined there should be no chance of peace, for she rated one of them with the term "coward." Actual hostilities were, however, commenced by a huge fellow running through the crowd and stopping before each man of

the opposite party, whom he greeted with the foul phrase "liar:" his purpose was soon answered; one, less patient than the rest, struck him a blow; their sticks were crossed, and in a moment hundreds had joined the *mêlée*. They fought for above an hour—and, at length, one party was beaten off the field. But, in truth, we can do little good by entering into minute explanations of a scene so revolting; and we shall prefer leaving them to the reader's fancy; communicating the attendant consequences in the less disagreeable form of a story; telling it, however, as nearly as we can call them to mind, in the very words in which we heard it; and so carrying out our plan of varying dry details by the introduction of matter more attractive.

"The faction fights, plase your honours," said an intelligent countryman when spoken to by us on the subject, "the faction fights are a'most, and maybe more than a'most, gone off the face of the country. The boys are beginning to talk about them as things they have seen—like a show or a giant. We ask each other how we were ever drawn into them, what brought them about; and the one answer to that, is —Whisky! No gun will go off until it is *primed*, and sure whisky was the priming. That made more orphans and widows than the fever or starvation. Thanks be to God, if death come upon us now, it is by the Lord's will, and not our own act."

It was encouraging to hear such a remark from one of "the people;" and this was by no means a solitary instance.

The man had, he confessed, many a time when a

mere child, incited by the example of the faction to whom his parents belonged, nerved his little arms to cast heavy stones into the *mêlée*, not caring how or where they fell. "We usen't to mind *a bit of a shindy in those times:* if a boy was killed, why we said it was 'his luck,' and that it couldn't be helped; if a fellow trailed his coat over the fair green, and *dared* any one to stand a foot on it, we enjoyed the fight that was sure to follow, and never thought or cared how it would end. Sure I remember my own brother —and now since he's been a temperance man, he hasn't raised a finger in anger to any living creature —sure I mind him well, *feeling the tents for heads*, and when he'd get one to his liking, giving it first a good rap, and then calling on the owner to come out and fight him; sure he'd never have done that but for the whisky." "Ah," he continued, "that was a foolish *divarshin*, but there was no *heart* bitterness with it; nothing to *lay heavy* to the end of one's days. But the faction fights war the bitterest of all —black hatred descending from father to son, against the opposite faction, as if poor Ireland hadn't enough enemies without turning—worse than a wild beast— to murder and destroy her own flesh and blood. Now there's a poor woman," he said, pointing to a pale, patient-looking person who sat knitting at her cottage door,—"there's a poor creature! Mrs. Lawler knows what factions come to, and so she ought; she'll tell the lady her story and welcome, if she has any curiosity to hear it. Good morrow-morning to you, Mrs. Lawler, and how's your girleen, ma'am? The lady would be glad to rest while the gentleman

and I get up the far hill; and you have always a welcome, like your people before you, for the stranger."

"Kindly welcome," said the widow. "Mary, dust the chair, avourneen."

The cabin was clean and neat, and bearing no evidence of the presence of that sad poverty we had so frequently seen, though it did not dim the smile or lessen the welcome; nor was it difficult to lead the widow to the story of sorrows, which, however softened by time, were ever uppermost in her mind.

"My mother and myself were widowed by factions —plase God my little girl won't have the same tale to tell, for the Connels and the Lawlers might put salt to each other's potatoes without fear of fighting, now. It was a shocking thing to see the arm of brother raised against brother, only because as battle and murder war in the hearts of their forefathers they must be continued in their own.

"I was born a Connel, and almost the first thing I learned was to hate a Lawler, from the lip out; and yet hard fortune was before me, for the very first passion my heart felt was the same love it feels still, for a Lawler; it has known no change, though it has known sorrow; the first knowledge I had of the wild beatings of my own heart was when I saw that girl's father. Ah yah! it has beat with joy and terror often; but the love for my first love, and my last, was always one; and now, when all is past and gone, and that you, Mark Lawler, are in your green, quiet grave, I am prouder to have been the choice of your own fine noble spirit, than if I was made this moment

the queen of all Ireland's ground. Oh, lady! if you could have seen him! 'Norah,' said my father to me, and I winnowing at our barn door with the servant-maid, 'Norah, keep your eyes on the grain, and not after the chaff, and don't raise them above the hedge, for there's many a Lawler will be passing the road this day on account of the fair, and I don't wish a child of mine to notice them, or to be noticed by them.' I intended to do his bidding, and whenever I heard a horse, or the voices of strangers coming down the boreen, I kept my eyes on the grain, and let the chaff fly at its pleasure, until a dog broke through the hedge, and attacked a little beast of my own; so as soon as that came to pass, I let the sieve fall, to catch my own little dog in my arms; there was no need for that, for HE was over the hedge, lighter and brighter than a sunbeam. Ah, then, I wonder is love as quick at taking in all countries as it is here? Mark Lawler didn't speak ten words, nor I two; and yet from that out—under the bames of the moon or the sun, in the open field or in the crowd, it was all one; no one but Mark Lawler was in my mind. I knew he was a Lawler by his eyes, and well he knew I was a Connel; but the love would have little of boy and girl love in it that would heed a faction. We, who had never met till that moment, could never go astray in the fields without meeting after. Ah! Mary," she continued, addressing her daughter, and yet, in her simplicity, quite forgetting she had been proving the uselessness of precept by her own confession; "ah, Mary dear, if ye feel yer heart soften towards a young man, keep

out of his way intirely, avourneen; have nothing to say to him, don't drive your cow the same road he walks, nor draw water from the same well, nor go to the same chapel, Mary, barrin' you have no other to go to: there's a deal of mischief in the chapel, dear, because you think in your innocence you're giving your thoughts to God, and all the time, maybe, it's to an idol of your own making, my darling child, they'd be going; sure your mother's sorrow ought to be a warning, avourneen!"

"Yes, mother," replied the blue-eyed girl meekly.

"Well, lady, my poor father thought I grew very attentive intirely to the young lambs, and watchful over the flax; but at last some of the Connels whispered how it was, that Mark Lawler met his child unknownst; and he questioned me, and I told the truth, how I had given my heart out of my bosom, and I fell at his feet, and cried salt and bitter tears until they dropped upon the ground he stood on; and seeing his heart was turning to iron, I, who had ever been like a willow in his hand, roused myself, and challenged him to say a word to Mark's disadvantage. I said he was sober, honest, industrious, and my father was struck with the *strength of the heart* I took, and listened, until at last he made answer, that if a saint from heaven came down, and was a Lawler, he would not give him a drop of water to wet his lips. He threatened me with his curse if I kept true in my love, and thought to settle the thing out of hand by marrying me to my own second cousin; but that I wouldn't hear to; God knows I did not mean to cross him, but what could I do? Mark sent to ask me to

bid him farewell, or his heart would break; I thought there could be no harm in blessing him, and telling him to think of me no more. Mary, avourneen," she said, again addressing her daughter, "if ye really want to break off at once with a young man, take warning by me."

"Yes, mother," was again Mary's gentle reply.

"At that meeting we agreed to meet again; and so we did, until we got a priest to make us one. At first I was happy as a young bird; but soon my heart felt crushed, for I had to carry two faces. My father was more bitter than ever against the Lawlers; and my brother, 'Dark Connel,' as he was called, more cruel than my father. At last I was forced to own that I was married. I watched the time when my brother was away; for one storm was as much as I could bear. My father cast me like a dog from the hearth I had played on when a child; in his fury he knelt to curse me, but my mother *held a gospel against his lips;* so I was saved his curse. The arms of a loving husband were open for me; and until the midsummer fair I thought my happiness was sure. I worked hard to keep Mark from it, for the factions were sure to meet there; he swore to me that he would not raise a finger against my father or brother, nor let a drop of spirits pass his lips. I walked with him a piece of the way, and I thought all pleasure in sight left my eyes when he waved the last wave of his hat on the top of the hill. As I was turning into our own field, a lark was rising above its nest, singing its glory to the heavens in its sweet voice, when a shot from the gun of one of those *squireens* who are thick

among the leaves as spiders' webs, struck the bird, and it fell quivering and bleeding close to where I knew its nest was in the corn. I opened the bending grain to see if I could find it; it was lying quite dead, and its poor mate standing close by. The lark is a timid thing, but she never minded me, and my heart felt so sick, that I went into my house crying bitterly.

"I could not rest; I thought in a few hours I might be like that innocent bird; and taking my cloak about me, I walked on and on, until I came in sight of the fair green. It was a woful sight to me—the shouts of the showmen, the scream of the sellers, the lowing of cattle and bleating of sheep, were all mixed together—while the yell of the factions, every now and again, drowned everything in its horrid sound. I knew my own father's voice as he shouted, 'Hurroo for the Connels!—down with the Lawlers!' I saw him standing before Mark, aggravating him. My husband's hands were clenched, and he kept his arms close by his side that he might not strike. I prayed that God might keep him in that mind, and flew towards them. Just as I dropped on my knees by his side, he had raised his arm — not against my father, but against my brother, who had drawn the old man back; and there they stood face to face—the two young heads of the old factions—blows were exchanged, for Mark had been aggravated beyond all bearing; and I was trying to force myself between them, when I saw my father stretched upon the green, in the very hour and act of revenge and sin. It was by a blow from a Lawler—the old man never spoke

another word—and the suddenness of his death (for he was liked by the one and hated by the other) struck a terror in them all—the sticks fell to their sides—and the great storm of oaths and voices sunk into a murmur while they looked on the dying man.

"Oh! bitter, heart bitter, was my sorrow. I shrouded my father with my arms, but he didn't feel me; the feeling had left his limbs, and the light his eyes; however hard his words had been, the knowledge that I was fatherless, and my mother a widow, made me forget them all! While some of the neighbours ran for a priest, and others raised *the cry*, my brother—*darker* than ever I had seen him—fell upon his knees, and dipping his hand in the warm blood that poured from the old man's wounds, held it up in the sight of the Connels. 'Boys,' he shouted, and his voice was like the howl of a wild beast—'Boys! by this blood I swear never to make peace till the hour of my death with one of the name who have done this, but to hackle and rive, and destroy all belonging to the Lawlers.'

"And the women who war about me cried out at my brother, and said, sure his sister was a Connel; but he looked at me worse than if I was a sarpent, and resting his hand—wet as it was—upon my head, turned away, saying, '*She is marked with her father's blood in the sight of the people.*'

"I thought I should have died, and when I came to myself I found I was in a poor woman's cabin, as good as half-way home, with two or three of the neighbours about me; and my husband, the very *moral* of a broken heart, by my side. 'Avourneen

gra!' he said, striving to keep down the workings of his heart—'Avourneen gra! I had no hand in it at all. God knows I wouldn't have hurt a hair of his white head.' I knew it was the truth he was telling, yet somehow the words of my brother clung about me—*I was marked with my father's blood.*

"And the Connels put the old man's corpse upon a cart, and laid a clean white cloth over it, and carried him past my own little place—keening over it and cursing the hand that gave him his death: hundreds of the neighbours mixed with my own people, my widowed mother and my dark brother following; and so they passed by our door; for miles along the road I could hear the loud scream of the mother that bore me, high above the voices of all the rest. Oh! it was a horrid sound and a horrid sight!

"His death was talked of far and near; the magistrates set to putting down the factions, and the priest gave out from the altar, Sunday after Sunday, such commands, that, without flying in his reverence's face, they could not keep on at the fights in public; every innocent diversion through the country was stopped on their account; but though there was outward peace, yet day after day I was followed by the spirit of my brother's words; the world wouldn't put it out of his head that Mark struck the mortal blow, and he turned his ear from me, and from his own mother, and would not believe the truth.

"For as good as two years, the husband, whose life was the life-beat of my worn-out heart, seldom left the cabin without my thinking he would never come back. I'd wait till he was a few yards from

the door, and then steal out to watch him till he was out of sight. At ploughing or haymaking or reaping, his whistle would come over the little hill to me, while I sat at my wheel, as clear as a blackbird's; and if it stopped but for a minute, my heart would sink like death; and it's to the door I'd be. If I woke in the night, I could not go to sleep again without my arm across his shoulder to feel that he was safe; and my first and last prayer to the Almighty, night and morning, was for him.

"My brother was very fond of children, and though he had gone to live at the other side of the parish, I managed to meet him one evening and place little Mary before him; but his face darkened so over the child, that I was afraid *she might be struck* with an evil eye, and, making the sign of the cross on her, I covered her from his sight with my cloak: after that I knew nothing would turn his hatred, except the grace of God; and though I wished that he might have it, whenever I tried to pray for it for him, *my blood turned cold.* I've often thought," she continued, after a pause, "what a blessing it is that we have no knowledge of the sorrow we're born to; for if we had, we could not bear life. *I had that knowledge;* Mark never smiled on me that I did not *feel my flesh creep*, lest it should be his last. He'd tell sometimes of how things were mending, how there was much bitterness going out of the country; and though there was no talk of temperance then, he saw plain enough, that if men would keep from whisky they'd forget to be angry. And every minute, even while I trembled for the life of his body, the peace and love that was

in him made me easy as to the life of his soul. At last I persuaded him to leave the country; a new hope came to me, strong and bright, and I thought we might get away to America, and that, maybe, then he'd have a chance of living all the days that were allotted at his birth. I did not tell him that, but having got his consent, I worked night and day to get off: it was all settled; the day fixed; and none of the neighbours, barrin' one or two of the Lawlers, knew it, and I knew my brother would not hear it from them; and then my mother lived with him. The evening before the day was come; that time to-morrow we were to be on shipboard. 'I'll go,' says my husband, 'I'll go to the priest this evening, who christened, confirmed, and married me, and who knows all that was in me from the time I was born; his blessing will be a guard over us, and we'll go together to his knee.'

"We went; and though the parting was sad, it was sweet: we walked homewards—both our hearts full. At last Mark said, that only for me he'd never have thought of leaving the old sod; but, maybe, it would be for the best. I opened my mind to him then *intirely, and owned more than ever I had done before,* how the dread of the factions had disturbed me day and night; though I did not tell him how *my father's blood had been laid on me by my own brother.* He laughed at me—his gay, wild laugh—and said he hoped my trouble was gone like the winter's snow. Now, this is a simple thing, and yet it always struck me as mighty strange intirely; we were walking through a field, and, God help me, it was a weak

woman's fancy, but I never thought any harm could come to him when I was with him, and all of a sudden —started, maybe, at his laugh—a lark sprung up at our feet; we both watched it, stopped to watch it, about three yards from the ditch, and while it was yet clear in sight, a whiz—a flash as of lightning—the sound of death—and my husband was a corpse at my feet."

The poor woman flung her apron over her face to conceal her agitation, while she sobbed bitterly. "The spirit of the factions," she continued, "was in that fatal shot. Oh that he, my blessing and my pride, should have been struck in the hour of hope! Oh, Mark! Mark! long ago you, that I loved so well, were turned into clay—many a long day ago; and still I think when I sit on your green grass grave I can hear your voice telling me of your happiness; the heart of the youngest maid was not more free from spot than yours, my own darling! And to think that one of my own blood should have taken you from my side. Oh, then it was I who felt the curse of blood!"

"And was it—was it?" we would have asked, "was it your brother?"

"Whisht!" she whispered—"Whisht, avourneen, whisht! *he's in his grave, too—though I didn't inform—I left him to God.* When I came to myself, the place around—the very sky where the lark and his soul had mounted together—looked dismal, *but not so dark as the dark-faced man who did it:* he had no power to leave the spot; he was fixed there; something he said about his father and revenge. God help me!

sure we war nursed at the same breast. *No one knew it but me;* so I left him to God—I left him to God! And he withered, lady! he withered off the face of the earth — withered, my mother told me, away, away—he was *eat to death by his conscience!* Oh, who would think a faction could end in such a crime as that!

"Ah! people who live among the flowers of the earth know little of the happiness I have in taking my child, and sitting beside her on her father's grave; and as month afther month goes by, *I can't but feel I'm all the sooner to be with him!*" When she said this, it was impossible not to feel for her daughter; the poor girl cast such a piteous look upon her mother, and at last, unable to control herself, flung her arms tightly round her neck, as though she would keep her there for ever.

Again and again did her mother return her caresses —murmuring, "My colleen-das will never be widowed by faction now; the spirit is all gone, praise be to the Lord: and so I tell *him* when I sit upon his grave."

THE DRUNKARD'S DREAM.

"All this *he* told with some confusion and
Dismay, the usual consequence of dreams
Of the unpleasant kind, with none at hand
To expound their vain and visionary gleams.
I've known some odd ones which seemed really planned
Prophetically, as that which one deems
'A strange coincidence,' to use a phrase
By which such things are settled now-a-days."

—Byron.

Dreams—What age, or what country of the world has not felt and acknowledged the mystery of their origin and end? I have thought not a little upon the subject, seeing it is one which has been often forced upon my attention, and sometimes strangely enough; and yet I have never arrived at anything which at all appeared a satisfactory conclusion. It does appear that a mental phenomenon so extraordinary cannot be wholly without its use. We know, indeed, that in the olden times it has been made the organ of communication between the Deity and His creatures; and when, as I have seen, a dream produces upon a mind, to all appearance hopelessly reprobate and depraved, an effect so powerful and so lasting as to break down the inveterate habits, and to reform the life of an abandoned sinner, we see in the result, in the reformation of morals, which appeared incorrigible in the reclamation of a human soul which seemed to be irretrievably lost, something more than could be pro-

duced by a mere chimæra of the slumbering fancy, something more than could arise from the capricious images of a terrified imagination; but once prevented, we behold in all these things, in the tremendous and mysterious results, the operation of the hand of God. And while Reason rejects as absurd the superstition which will read a prophecy in every dream, she may, without violence to herself, recognise, even in the wildest and most incongruous of the wanderings of a slumbering intellect, the evidences and the fragments of a language which may be spoken, which *has* been spoken to terrify, to warn, and to command. We have reason to believe too, by the promptness of action, which in the age of the prophets followed all intimations of this kind, and by the strength of conviction and strange permanence of the effects resulting from certain dreams in latter times, which effects ourselves may have witnessed, that when this medium of communication has been employed by the Deity, the evidences of His presence have been unequivocal. My thoughts were directed to this subject, in a manner to leave a lasting impression upon my mind, by the events which I shall now relate, the statement of which, however extraordinary, is nevertheless *accurately correct.*

About the year 17——, having been appointed to the living of C——h, I rented a small house in the town which bears the same name: one morning, in the month of November, I was awakened before my usual time, by my servant, who bustled into my bedroom for the purpose of announcing a sick call. As the Catholic Church holds her last rites to be totally

indispensable to the safety of the departing sinner, no conscientious clergyman can afford a moment's unnecessary delay, and in little more than five minutes I stood ready cloaked and booted for the road in the small front parlour, in which the messenger, who was to act as my guide, awaited my coming. I found a poor little girl crying piteously near the door, and after some slight difficulty I ascertained that her father was either dead or just dying.

"And what may be your father's name, my poor child?" said I. She held down her head, as if ashamed. I repeated the question, and the wretched little creature burst into floods of tears, still more bitter than she had shed before. At length, almost provoked by conduct which appeared to me so unreasonable, I began to lose patience, spite of the pity which I could not help feeling towards her, and I said rather harshly, "If you will not tell me the name of the person to whom you would lead me, your silence can arise from no good motive, and I might be justified in refusing to go with you at all."

"Oh, don't say that, don't say that," cried she. "Oh, sir, it was that I was afeard of when I would not tell you — I was afeard when you heard his name you would not come with me; but it is no use hidin' it now—it's Pat Connell, the carpenter, your honour."

She looked in my face with the most earnest anxiety, as if her very existence depended upon what she should read there; but I relieved her at once. The name, indeed, was most unpleasantly familiar to me; but, however fruitless my visits and advice might

have been at another time, the present was too fearful an occasion to suffer my doubts of their utility as my reluctance to reattempting what appeared a hopeless task to weigh even against the lightest chance, that a consciousness of his imminent danger might produce in him a more docile and tractable disposition. Accordingly I told the child to lead the way, and followed her in silence. She hurried rapidly through the long narrow street which forms the great thoroughfare of the town. The darkness of the hour, rendered still deeper by the close approach of the old-fashioned houses, which lowered in tall obscurity on either side of the way ; the damp, dreary chill which renders the advance of morning peculiarly cheerless, combined with the object of my walk, to visit the death-bed of a presumptuous sinner, to endeavour, almost against my own conviction, to infuse a hope into the heart of a dying reprobate—a drunkard, but too probably perishing under the consequences of some mad fit of intoxication ; all these circumstances united served to enhance the gloom and solemnity of my feelings, as I silently followed my little guide, who with quick steps traversed the uneven pavement of the main street. After a walk of about five minutes, she turned off into a narrow lane, of that obscure and comfortless class which are to be found in almost all small old-fashioned towns,—chill without ventilation, reeking with all manner of offensive effluviæ, dingy, smoky, sickly, and pent-up buildings, frequently not only in a wretched but in a dangerous condition.

"Your father has changed his abode since I last

visited him, and, I am afraid, much for the worse," said I.

"Indeed he has, sir, but we must not complain," replied she; "we have to thank God that we have lodging and food, though it's poor enough, it is, your honour."

Poor child! thought I, how many an older head might learn wisdom from thee—how many a luxurious philosopher, who is skilled to preach but not to suffer, might not thy patient words put to the blush! The manner and language of this child were alike above her years and station; and, indeed, in all cases in which the cares and sorrows of life have anticipated their usual date, and have fallen, as they sometimes do, with melancholy prematurity to the lot of childhood, I have observed the result to have proved uniformly the same. A young mind, to which joy and indulgence have been strangers, and to which suffering and self-denial have been familiarized from the first, acquires a solidity and an elevation which no other discipline could have bestowed, and which, in the present case, communicated a striking but mournful peculiarity to the manners, even to the voice of the child. We paused before a narrow, crazy door, which she opened by means of a latch, and we forthwith began to ascend the steep and broken stairs which led upwards to the sick man's room. As we mounted flight after flight towards the garret floor, I heard more and more distinctly the hurried talking of many voices. I could also distinguish the low sobbing of a female. On arriving upon the uppermost lobby, these sounds became fully audible.

"This way, your honour," said my little conductress, at the same time pushing open a door of patched and half-rotten plank, she admitted me into the squalid chamber of death and misery. But one candle, held in the fingers of a scared and haggard-looking child, was burning in the room, and that so dim that all was twilight or darkness except within its immediate influence. The general obscurity, however, served to throw into prominent and startling relief the death-bed and its occupant. The light was nearly approximated to, and fell with horrible clearness upon, the blue and swollen features of the drunkard. I did not think it possible that a human countenance could look so terrific. The lips were black and drawn apart—the teeth were firmly set—the eyes a little unclosed, and nothing but the whites appearing—every feature was fixed and livid, and the whole face wore a ghastly and rigid expression of despairing terror such as I never saw equalled; his hands were crossed upon his breast, and firmly clenched, while, as if to add to the corpse-like effect of the whole, some white cloths, dipped in water, were wound about the forehead and temples. As soon as I could remove my eyes from this horrible spectacle, I observed my friend Dr. D——, one of the most humane of a humane profession, standing by the bedside. He had been attempting, but unsuccessfully, to bleed the patient, and had now applied his finger to the pulse.

"Is there any hope?" I inquired in a whisper.

A shake of the head was the reply. There was a pause while he continued to hold the wrist; but he waited in vain for the throb of life, it was not there,

and when he let go the hand it fell stiffly back into its former position upon the other.

"The man is dead," said the physician, as he turned from the bed where the terrible figure lay.

Dead! thought I, scarcely venturing to look upon the tremendous and revolting spectacle — dead! without an hour for repentance, even a moment for reflection—dead! without the rites which even the best should have. Is there a hope for him? The glaring eyeball, the grinning mouth, the distorted brow—that unutterable look in which a painter would have sought to embody the fixed despair of the nethermost hell—these were my answer.

The poor wife sat at a little distance, crying as if her heart would break—the younger children clustered round the bed, looking, with wondering curiosity, upon the form of death, never seen before. When the first tumult of uncontrollable sorrow had passed away, availing myself of the solemnity and impressiveness of the scene, I desired the heart-stricken family to accompany me in prayer, and all knelt down, while I solemnly and fervently repeated some of those prayers which appeared most applicable to the occasion. I employed myself thus in a manner, which, I trusted, was not unprofitable, at least to the living, for about ten minutes, and having accomplished my task, I was the first to arise. I looked upon the poor, sobbing, helpless creatures who knelt so humbly around me, and my heart bled for them. With a natural transition, I turned my eyes from them to the bed in which the body lay, and, great God! what was the revulsion, the horror which I experienced on

seeing the corpse-like, terrific thing seated half upright before me; the white cloths, which had been wound about the head, had now partly slipped from their position, and were hanging in grotesque festoons about the face and shoulders, while the distorted eyes leered from amid them—

"A sight to dream of, not to tell."

I stood actually riveted to the spot. The figure nodded its head and lifted its arm, I thought with a menacing gesture. A thousand confused and horrible thoughts at once rushed upon my mind. I had often read that the body of a presumptuous sinner, who, during life, had been the willing creature of every satanic impulse, after the human tenant had deserted it, had been known to become the horrible sport of demoniac possession. I was roused from the stupefaction of terror in which I stood, by the piercing scream of the mother, who now, for the first time, perceived the change which had taken place. She rushed towards the bed, but, stunned by the shock and overcome by the conflict of violent emotions, before she reached it she fell prostrate upon the floor. I am perfectly convinced that had I not been startled from the torpidity of horror in which I was bound, by some powerful and arousing stimulant, I should have gazed upon this unearthly apparition until I had fairly lost my senses. As it was, however, the spell was broken, superstition gave way to reason: the man whom all believed to have been actually dead, was living! Dr. D—— was instantly standing by the bedside, and, upon examination, he found

that a sudden and copious flow of blood had taken place from the wound which the lancet had left, and this, no doubt, had effected his sudden and almost preternatural restoration to an existence from which all thought he had been for ever removed. The man was still speechless, but he seemed to understand the physician when he forbade his repeating the painful and fruitless attempts which he made to articulate, and he at once resigned himself quietly into his hands.

I left the patient with leeches upon his temples, and bleeding freely—apparently with little of the drowsiness which accompanies apoplexy; indeed, Dr. D—— told me that he had never before witnessed a seizure which seemed to combine the symptoms of so many kinds, and yet which belonged to none of the recognised classes; it certainly was not apoplexy, catalepsy, nor *delirium tremens*, and yet it seemed, in some degree, to partake of the properties of all;—it was strange, but stranger things are coming.

During two or three days Dr. D—— would not allow his patient to converse in a manner which could excite or exhaust him, with any one; he suffered him merely, as briefly as possible, to express his immediate wants, and it was not until the fourth day after my early visit, the particulars of which I have just detailed, that it was thought expedient that I should see him, and then only because it appeared that his extreme importunity and impatience were likely to retard his recovery more than the mere exhaustion attendant upon a short conversation could possibly do; perhaps, too, my friend entertained some hope that if by holy confession his patient's bosom were eased of the

perilous stuff, which, no doubt, oppressed it, his recovery would be more assured and rapid. It was, then, as I have said, upon the fourth day after my first professional call, that I found myself once more in the dreary chamber of want and sickness. The man was in bed, and appeared low and restless. On my entering the room, he raised himself in the bed, and muttered twice or thrice—"Thank God! thank God!" I signed to those of his family who stood by, to leave the room, and took a chair beside the bed. So soon as we were alone, he said, rather doggedly—"There's no use now in telling me of the sinfulness of bad ways—I know it all—I know where they lead to—I seen everything about it with my own eye-sight, as plain as I see you." He rolled himself in the bed, as if to hide his face in the clothes, and then, suddenly raising himself, he exclaimed with startling vehemence—"Look, sir, there is no use in mincing the matter; I'm blasted with the fires of hell; I have been in hell; what do think of that?—in hell—I'm lost for ever—I have not a chance—I am damned already—damned—damned"— The end of this sentence he actually shouted; his vehemence was perfectly terrific; he threw himself back, and laughed and sobbed hysterically. I poured some water into a tea-cup, and gave it to him. After he had swallowed it, I told him if he had anything to communicate, to do so as briefly as he could, and in a manner as little agitating to himself as possible; threatening at the same time, though I had no intention of doing so, to leave him at once, in case he again gave way to such passionate excitement. "It's only foolishness,"

he continued, "for me to try to thank you for coming to such a villain as myself at all; it's no use for me to wish good to you, or to bless you; for such as me has no blessings to give." I told him that I had but done my duty, and urged him to proceed to the matter which weighed upon his mind; he then spoke nearly as follows:—"I came in drunk on Friday night last, and got to my bed here, I don't remember how; sometime in the night, it seemed to me, I wakened, and feeling unasy in myself, I got up out of the bed. I wanted the fresh air, but I would not make a noise to open the window, for fear I'd waken the crathurs. It was very dark, and throublesome to find the door; but at last I did get it, and I groped my way out, and went down as asy as I could. I felt quite sober, and I counted the steps one after another, as I was going down, that I might not stumble at the bottom. When I came to the first landing-place, God be about us always! the floor of it sunk under me, and I went down, down, down, till the senses almost left me. I do not know how long I was falling, but it seemed to me a great while. When I came rightly to myself at last, I was sitting at a great table, near the top of it; and I could not see the end of it, if it had any, it was so far off; and there was men beyond reckoning, sitting down, all along by it, at each side, as far as I could see at all. I did not know at first was it in the open air; but there was a close smothering feel in it, that was not natural, and there was a kind of light that my eyesight never saw before, red and unsteady, and I did not see for a long time where it was coming from, until I looked straight up, and then I seen that it

came from great balls of blood-coloured fire, that were rolling high overhead with a sort of rushing, trembling sound, and I perceived that they shone on the ribs of a great roof of rock that was arched overhead instead of the sky. When I seen this, scarce knowing what I did, I got up, and I said, 'I have no right to be here; I must go;' and the man that was sitting at my left hand only smiled, and said, 'Sit down again, you can *never* leave this place,' and his voice was weaker than any child's voice I ever heerd, and when he was done speaking he smiled again. Then I spoke out very loud and bold, and I said, 'In the name of God, let me out of this bad place.' And there was a great man, that I did not see before, sitting at the end of the table that I was near, and he was taller than twelve men, and his face was very proud and terrible to look at, and he stood up and stretched out his hand before him; and when he stood up, all that was there, great and small, bowed down with a sighing sound, and a dread came on my heart, and he looked at me, and I could not speak. I felt I was his own, to do what he liked with, for I knew at once who he was, and he said, 'If you promise to return, you may depart for a season;' and the voice he spoke with was terrible and mournful, and the echoes of it went rolling and swelling down the endless cave, and mixing with the trembling of the fire overhead; so that, when he sate down, there was a sound after him, all through the place like the roaring of a furnace, and I said, with all the strength I had, 'I promise to come back; in God's name let me go;' and with that I lost the sight and the hearing

of all that was there, and when my senses came to me again, I was sitting in the bed with the blood all over me, and you and the rest praying around the room." Here he paused and wiped away the chill drops of horror which hung upon his forehead.

I remained silent for some moments. The vision which he had just described struck my imagination not a little, for this was long before Vatheck and the "Hall of Eblis" had delighted the world; and the description which he gave had, as I received it, all the attractions of novelty beside the impressiveness which always belongs to the narration of an *eye-witness*, whether in the body or in the spirit, of the scenes which he describes. There was something, too, in the stern horror with which the man related these things, and in the incongruity of his description, with the vulgarly received notions of the great place of punishment, and of its presiding spirit, which struck my mind with awe, almost with fear. At length he said, with an expression of horrible, imploring earnestness, which I shall never forget, "Well, sir, is there any hope; is there any chance at all? or, is my soul pledged and promised away for ever? is it gone out of my power? must I go back to the place?"

In answering him I had no easy task to perform; for however clear might be my internal conviction of the groundlessness of his fears, and however strong my scepticism respecting the reality of what he had described, I nevertheless felt that his impression to the contrary, and his humility and terror resulting from it, might be made available as no mean engines

in the work of his conversion from profligacy, and of his restoration to decent habits, and to religious feeling. I therefore told him that he was to regard his dream rather in the light of a warning than in that of a prophecy; that our salvation depended not upon the word or deed of a moment, but upon the habits of a life; that, in fine, if he at once discarded his idle companions and evil habits, and firmly adhered to a sober, industrious, and religious course of life, the powers of darkness might claim his soul in vain, for that there were higher and firmer pledges than human tongue could utter, which promised salvation to him who should repent and lead a new life.

I left him much comforted, and with a promise to return upon the next day. I did so, and found him much more cheerful, and without any remains of the dogged sullenness which I suppose had arisen from his despair. His promises of amendment were given in that tone of deliberate earnestness which belongs to deep and solemn determination; and it was with no small delight that I observed, after repeated visits, that his good resolutions, so far from failing, did but gather strength by time; and when I saw that man shake off the idle and debauched companions, whose society had for years formed alike his amusement and his ruin, and revive his long-discarded habits of industry and sobriety, I said within myself, there is something more in all this than the operation of an idle dream. One day, some time after his perfect restoration to health, I was surprised on ascending the stairs, for the purpose of visiting this man, to find him busily employed in nailing down some planks upon

the landing-place, through which, at the commencement of his mysterious vision, it seemed to him that he had sunk. I perceived at once that he was strengthening the floor with a view to securing himself against such a catastrophe, and could scarcely forbear a smile as I bid "God bless his work."

He perceived my thoughts, I suppose, for he immediately said,—

"I can never pass over that floor without trembling. I'd leave this house if I could, but I can't find another lodging in the town so cheap, and I'll not take a better till I've paid off all my debts, please God; but I could not be asy in my mind till I made it as safe as I could. You'll hardly believe me, your honour, that while I'm working, maybe a mile away, my heart is in a flutter the whole way back, with the bare thoughts of the two little steps I have to walk upon this bit of a floor. So it's no wonder, sir, I'd thry to make it sound and firm with any idle timber I have."

I applauded his resolution to pay off his debts, and the steadiness with which he pursued his plans of conscientious economy, and passed on.

Many months elapsed, and still there appeared no alteration in his resolutions of amendment. He was a good workman, and with his better habits he recovered his former extensive and profitable employment. Everything seemed to promise comfort and respectability. I have little more to add, and that shall be told quickly. I had one evening met Pat Connell, as he returned from his work, and as usual, after a mutual, and on his side respectful salutation, I spoke a few words of encouragement and

approval. I left him industrious, active, healthy; when next I saw him, not three days after, he was a corpse. The circumstances which marked the event of his death were somewhat strange—I might say fearful. The unfortunate man had accidentally met an early friend, just returned, after a long absence, and in a moment of excitement, forgetting everything in the warmth of his joy, he yielded to his urgent invitation to accompany him into a public-house, which lay close by the spot where the encounter had taken place. Connell, however, previously to entering the room, had announced his determination to take nothing more than the strictest temperance would warrant. But oh! who can describe the inveterate tenacity with which a drunkard's habits cling to him through life. He may repent—he may reform—he may look with actual abhorrence upon his past profligacy; but amid all this reformation and compunction, who can tell the moment in which the base and ruinous propensity may not recur, triumphing over resolution, remorse, shame, everything, and prostrating its victim once more in all that is destructive and revolting in that fatal vice.

The wretched man left the place in a state of utter intoxication. He was brought home nearly insensible, and placed in his bed, where he lay in the deep, calm lethargy of drunkenness. The younger part of the family retired to rest much after their usual hour; but the poor wife remained up sitting by the fire, too much grieved and shocked at the recurrence of what she had so little expected, to settle to rest; fatigue, however, at length overcame her, and she sunk

gradually into an uneasy slumber. She could not tell how long she had remained in this state, when she awakened, and immediately on opening her eyes, she perceived by the faint red light of the smouldering turf embers, two persons, one of whom she recognised as her husband, noiselessly gliding out of the room.

"Pat, darling, where are you going?" said she. There was no answer—the door closed after them; but in a moment she was startled and terrified by a loud and heavy crash, as if some ponderous body had been hurled down the stair. Much alarmed, she started up, and going to the head of the staircase, she called repeatedly upon her husband, but in vain. She returned to the room, and with the assistance of her daughter, whom I had occasion to mention before, she succeeded in finding and lighting a candle, with which she hurried again to the head of the staircase. At the bottom lay what seemed to be a bundle of clothes, heaped together, motionless, lifeless—it was her husband. In going down the stairs—for what purpose can never now be known—he had fallen helplessly and violently to the bottom, and coming head foremost, the spine at the neck had been dislocated by the shock, and instant death must have ensued. The body lay upon that landing-place to which his dream had referred. It is scarcely worth endeavouring to clear up a single point in a narrative where all is mystery; yet I could not help suspecting that the second figure which had been seen in the room by Connell's wife on the night of his death, might have been no other than his own shadow. I suggested this solution of the difficulty; but she told

me that the unknown person had been considerably in advance of the other, and on reaching the door, had turned back as if to communicate something to his companion ;—it was then a mystery. Was the dream verified ?—whither had the disembodied spirit sped ?—who can say ? We know not. But I left the house of death that day in a state of horror which I could not describe. It seemed to me that I was scarce awake. I heard and saw everything as if under the spell of a nightmare. The coincidence was terrible.

A TERRIBLE NIGHT.

"Tramp—tramp on the oaken floor!
Heard ye the spectre's hollow tread?
He marches along the corridor,
And the wainscot cracks beside thy bed
As he tracks his way through the jarring door,
Which the wild night-blast has opened."

My horse had cast a shoe; and, stopping about sunset at a blacksmith's cabin in one of the most savage passes of a certain district in Ireland, which need not be more particularly described, a smutty-faced, leather-aproned fellow was soon engaged in enabling me again to encounter the flinty roads of the mountains, when the operation was interrupted in the manner here related:—

"Pardon me, sir," cried a middle-aged traveller, riding up to the smithy, and throwing himself from his horse just as the shaggy-headed Vulcan, having taken the heels of my nag in his lap, was proceeding to pare off the hoof preparatory to fitting the shoe, which he had hammered into shape, and thrown on the black soil beside him. "Pardon me, sir," repeated the stranger, raising his broad-brimmed beaver from a head remarkable for what the phrenologist would call the uncommon development of "ideality," revealed by the short locks which parted over a pair of melancholy grey eyes, "matters of moment make it important for me to be a dozen miles hence before

nightfall, and you will place me, sir, under singular obligations by allowing this good fellow to attend to my lame beast instantly."

The confident and not ungraceful manner in which the stranger threw himself upon my courtesy sufficiently marked him as a man of breeding, and I, of course, complied at once with his request by giving the necessary order to the blacksmith. His horse was soon put in travelling trim, and, leaping actively into the saddle, he regained the highway at a bound; checking his course then a moment, he turned in his stirrups to thank me for the slight service I had rendered him, and, giving an address which I have now forgotten, he added that if ever I should enter ——'s valley, I might be sure of a cordial welcome from the proprietor.

An hour afterward I was pursuing the same road, and rapidly approaching the end of my day's journey. The immediate district through which I was travelling could not be compared with the regions on the eastern side of the mountains; but the immense stone barns, which, though few and far between, occasionally met the eye, not less than the language spoken around me, indicated that the inhabitants were of the same origin with the ignorant but industrious denizens of the lower country.

One of these stone buildings, an enormous and ungainly edifice, stood upon a hill immediately at the back of the W—— Hotel,—a miserable wooden hovel, where I expected to pass the night; and, while descending the hill in rear of the village, I had leisure to observe that it presented a somewhat

different appearance from the other agricultural establishments of the kind which I had met with during the day. The massive walls were pierced here and there with narrow windows, which looked like loop-holes, and a clumsy chimney had been fitted up by some unskilful mechanic against one of the gables, with a prodigality of materials which made its jagged top show like some old turret in the growing twilight. The history of this grotesque mansion, as I subsequently learned it, was that of a hundred others scattered over our country, and known generally in the neighbourhood as "O'Brien's," or "Flannigan's Folly." It had been commenced upon an ambitious scale by a person whose means were inadequate to its completion, and had been sacrificed at a public sale when half-finished, in order to liquidate the claims of the mechanics employed upon it. After that it had been used as a granary for a while, and subsequently, being rudely completed without any reference to the original plan, it had been occupied as a hotel for a few years. The ruinous inn had, however, for a long period been abandoned, and now enjoyed the general reputation in the neighbourhood of being haunted, for ghosts and goblins are always sure to take a big house off a landlord's hands when he can get no other tenant.

Throwing myself from my horse without further parley, I told the landlord to get me some supper, and we would talk about lodging afterwards.

It matters not how I got through the evening until the hour of bedtime arrived. I had soon ascertained that every bed in the hostelry was really taken up,

and that unless I chose to share his straw with one of the waggoners, who are accustomed to sleep in their lumbering vehicles, there was no resource for me except to occupy the lonely building which had first caught my eye on entering the hamlet. Upon inquiring as to the accommodation it afforded, I learned that, though long deserted by any permanent occupants, it was still occasionally, notwithstanding its evil reputation, resorted to by the passing traveller, and that one or two of the rooms were yet in good repair, and partially furnished. The good woman of the house, however, looked very portentous when I expressed my determination to take up my abode for the night in the haunted ruin, though she tried ineffectually to rouse her sleeping husband to guide me thither. Mine host had been luxuriating too freely in some old whisky to heed the jogging of his spouse, and I was obliged to act as my own gentleman-usher.

The night was raw and gusty as, with my saddle-bags in one hand and a stable-lantern in the other, I sallied from the door of the cabaret, and struggled up the broken hill in its rear to gain my uninviting place of rest. A rude porch, which seemed to have been long unconscious of a door, admitted me into the building; and tracking my way with some difficulty through a long corridor, of which the floor appeared to have been ripped open here and there in order to apply the boards to some other purpose, I came to a steep and narrow staircase without any ballusters. Cautiously ascending, I found myself in a large hall which opened on the hill-side, against which the

house was built. It appeared to be lighted by a couple of windows only, which were partially glazed in some places, and closed up in others by rough boards nailed across in lieu of shutters. It had evidently, however, judging from two or three ruinous pieces of furniture, been inhabited. A heavy door, whose oaken latch and hinges, being incapable of rust, were still in good repair, admitted me into an adjoining chamber. This had evidently been the dormitory of the establishment, where the guests, after the gregarious and most disagreeable fashion of our country, were wont to be huddled together in one large room. The waning moon, whose bright autumnal crescent was just beginning to rise above the hills, shone through a high circular window full into this apartment, and indicated a comfortable-looking truckle-bed at the further end before the rays of my miserable lantern had shot beyond the threshold.

Upon approaching the pallet I observed some indications of that end of the apartment being still occasionally occupied. The heavy beams which traversed the ceiling appeared to have been recently whitewashed. There was a small piece of carpet on the floor beside the bed ; and a decrepit table, and an arm-chair, whose burly body was precariously supported upon three legs, were holding an innocent *tête-à-tête* in the corner adjacent.

"I've had a rougher roosting-place than this," thought I, as I placed my lantern upon the table, and depositing my saddle-bags beneath it, began to prepare myself for rest.

My light having now burned low, I was compelled to expedite the operation of undressing, which prevented me from examining the rest of the apartment; and, indeed, although I had, when first welcoming with some pleasure the idea of sleeping in a haunted house, determined fully to explore it for my own satisfaction before retiring for the night, yet fatigue or caprice made me now readily abandon the intention just when my means for carrying it into execution were being withdrawn; for the candle expired while I was opening the door of the lantern to throw its light more fully upon a mass of drapery which seemed to be suspended across the further end of the chamber. The total darkness that momentarily ensued blinded me completely; but in the course of a few moments the shadows became more distinct, and gradually, by the light of the moon, I was able to make out that the object opposite me was only a large old-fashioned bedstead prodigally hung with tattered curtains. I gave no further thought to the subject, but turning over, composed myself to rest.

Sleep, however, whom Shakespeare alone has had the sense to personify as a woman, was coy in coming to my couch. The old mansion wheezed and groaned like a broken-winded buffalo hard pressed by the hunter. The wind, which had been high, became soon more boisterous than ever, and the clouds hurried so rapidly over the face of the moon that her beams were as broken as the crevices of the ruined building through which they fell. A sudden gust would every now and then sweep through the long corridor below, and make the rickety staircase crack

as if it yielded to the feet of some portly passenger. Again the blast would die away in a sullen moan, as if baffled on some wild night-errand; while anon it would swell in monotonous surges, which came booming upon the ear like the roar of a distant ocean.

I am not easily discomposed; and perhaps none of these uncouth sounds would have given annoyance if the clanging of a window-shutter had not been added to the general chorus, and effectually kept me from sleeping. My nerves were at last becoming sensibly affected by its ceaseless din, and, wishing to cut short the fit of restlessness which I found growing upon me, I determined to rise, and descend the stairs, at the risk of my neck, to try and secure the shutter so as to put an end to the nuisance.

But now, as I rose from my bed for this purpose, I found myself subjected to a new source of annoyance. The mocking wind, which had appeared to me more than once to syllable human sounds, came at length upon my ear distinctly charged with tones which could not be mistaken. It was the hard-suppressed breathing of a man. I listened, and it ceased with a slight gasp, like that of one labouring under suffocation. I listened still, and it came anew, stronger and more fully upon my ear. It was like the thick suspirations of an apoplectic. Whence it proceeded I knew not; but that it was near me I was certain. A suspicion of robbery—possibly assassination—flashed upon me; but was instantly discarded as foreign to the hospitable character of the people among whom I was travelling.

The moonlight now fell full upon the curtained bed opposite to me, and I saw the tattered drapery move, as if the frame upon which it was suspended were agitated. I watched, I confess, with some peculiar feelings of interest. I was not alarmed, but an unaccountable anxiety crept over me. At length the curtain parted, and a naked human leg was protruded through its folds; the foot came with a numb, dead-like sound to the floor; resting there, it seemed to me at least half a minute before the body to which it belonged was disclosed to my view.

Slowly, then, a pallid and unearthly-looking figure emerged from the couch, and stood with its stark lineaments clearly drawn against the dingy curtain beside it. It appeared to be balancing itself for a moment, and then began to move along from the bed. But there was something horribly unnatural in its motions. Its feet came to the floor with a dull, heavy sound, as if there were no vitality in them. Its arms hung, apparently, paralysed by its side, and the only nerve or rigidity in its frame appeared about its head; the hair, which was thin and scattered, stood out in rigid tufts from its brow, the eyes were dilated and fixed with an expression of ghastly horror, and the petrified lips moved not, as the hideous moaning which came from the bottom of its chest escaped them.

It began to move across the floor in the direction of my bed, its knees at every step being drawn up with a sudden jerk nearly to its body, and its feet coming to the ground as if they were moved by some mechanical impulse, and were wholly wanting in the

elasticity of living members. It approached my bed, and mingled horror and curiosity kept me still. It came and stood beside it, and, childlike, I still clung to my couch, moving only to the farther side. Slowly, and with the same unnatural footfalls, it pursued me thither, and again I changed my position. It placed itself then at the foot of my bedstead, and, moved by its piteous groans, I tried to look calmly at it;—I endeavoured to rally my thoughts, to reason with myself, and even to speculate upon the nature of the object before me. One idea that went through my brain was too extravagant not to remember. I thought, among other things, that the phantom was a corpse, animated for the moment by some galvanic process in order to terrify me. Then, as I recollected that there was no one in the village to carry such a trick into effect—supposing even the experiment possible—I rejected the supposition. How, too, could those awful moans be produced from an inanimate being? And yet it seemed as if everything about it were dead, except the mere capability of moving its feet, and uttering those unearthly expressions of suffering. The spectre, however, if so it may be called, gave me but little opportunity for reflection. Its ghastly limbs were raised anew with the same automaton movement; and, placing one of its feet upon the bottom of my bed, while its glassy eyes were fixed stedfastly upon me, it began stalking towards my pillow.

I confess that I was now in an agony of terror.

I leaped from the couch and fled the apartment. The keen-sightedness of fear enabled me to discover

an open closet upon the other side of the hall. Springing through the threshold, I closed the door quickly after me. It had neither lock nor bolt, but the closet was so narrow, that by placing my feet upon the opposite wall, I could brace my back against the door so as to hold it against any human assailant who had only his arms for a lever.

The sweat of mortal fear started thick upon my forehead as I heard the supernatural tread of that strange visitant approaching the spot. It seemed an age before his measured steps brought him to the door. He struck ;—the blow was sullen and hollow, as if dealt by the hand of a corpse—it was like the dull sound of his own feet upon the floor. He struck the door again, and the blow was more feeble, and the sound duller than before. Surely, I thought, the hand of no living man could produce such a sound.

I know not whether it struck again, for now its thick breathing became so loud, that even the moanings which were mingled with every suspiration became inaudible. At last they subsided entirely, becoming at first gradually weaker, and then audible only in harsh, sudden sobs, whose duration I could not estimate, from their mingling with the blast which still swept the hill-side.

The long, long night had at last an end, and the cheering sounds of the awakening farm-yard told me that the sun was up, and that I might venture from my blind retreat. But if it were still with a slight feeling of trepidation that I opened the door of the closet, what was my horror when a human body fell inward upon me, even as I unclosed it. The weak-

ness, however, left me the moment I had sprung from that hideous embrace. I stood for an instant in the fresh air and reviving light of the hall, and then proceeded to move the body to a place where I could examine its features more favourably. Great heaven! what was my horror upon discovering that they were those of the interesting stranger whom I had met on the road the evening before!

The rest of my story is soon told. The household of the inn were rapidly collected, and half the inhabitants of the hamlet identified the body as that of a gentleman well known in the country. But even after the coroner's inquest was summoned, there was no light thrown upon his fate, until my drunken landlord was brought before the jury. His own testimony would have gone for little; but he produced a document which in a few words told the whole story. It was a note left with him the evening before by Mr. ——, to be handed to me as soon as I should arrive at the inn. In it the stranger briefly thanked me for the slight courtesy rendered him at the blacksmith's, and mentioning that, notwithstanding all precaution, his horse had fallen dead lame, and he should be obliged to pass the night at W——, he would still further trespass on my kindness, by begging to occupy the same apartment with me. It stated that, owing to some organic affection of his system, he had long been subject to a species of somnambulism, resembling the most grievous fits of nightmare, during which, however, he still preserved sufficient powers of volition to move to the bed of his servant, who, being used to his attacks, would of

course take the necessary means to alleviate them. The note concluded by saying that the writer had less diffidence in preferring his request to be my room-mate, inasmuch as, owing to the crowded state of the house, I was sure of not having a chamber to myself in any event.

The reason why the ill-fated gentleman had been so urgent to press homeward was now but too apparent; and my indignation at the drunken innkeeper, in neglecting to hand me his note, knew no bounds. Alas! in the years that have since gone by, there has been more than one moment when the reproaches which I then lavished upon him have come home to myself; for the piteously appealing look of the dying man long haunted me, and I sometimes still hear his moan in the autumnal blast that wails around my casement.

A REALIZED DREAM.

By J. B. O'Meara.

Thump! thump! thump! came at the door of my bedroom. "What, ho! not awake yet! arouse thee, most somnolent of the seven sleepers! Get up, man, or by my faith, without further parley, I will crack my own panel and thy pate."

Such was the salutation which awoke me one lovely morning in September, many years since, from a heavy slumber at Oakville Abbey, the residence of my old schoolfellow, Colonel Maginnis.

We had lost sight of one another, through the diversities of our pursuits, for many a long and weary year; and it was mere accident that threw me into his company at Brighton at the latter end of the summer, which place he was on the point of leaving with his wife—a very delightful woman—for his residence in Killarney, to which I received an invitation for the autumn to talk over old times.

"Thump! thump!" again; I rubbed my eyes.

As usual, the *last man* at the breakfast table at a country mansion is invariably the target for every shaft right and left; and I had to undergo plenty of quizzing from the ladies, about my *pleasant dreams*, etc. etc.

"Well!" said I, "ladies, I plead guilty to a

dream, a *very odd* dream, as the reason for my late attendance."

"Oh dear! do let us hear it," chorused the petticoats.

On looking round the table at their anxious faces, I saw a strange, sudden glance, half-smiling, half-melancholy, rapidly exchanged between the silent Colonel and his lady; not conscious of the cause, but quickly divining there was something more meant than met the eye, I answered, "Oh, the chaotic nonsense of our slumbering fancies is not fit for the sober consciousness of the morning. I feel ashamed almost to have mentioned my dream. Who believes in dreams now-a-days?"

An attempt on the part of a Miss Simpeton to advocate the importance of dreams was met fortunately by Mrs. Maginnis (who was near her confinement) retiring, followed by the ladies, leaving Maginnis and me alone; who proposed a ride, and half an hour found us in the saddle.

The glorious breeze of the cheering morn freshened up ourselves and our good steeds, and we careered along the lovely country, merely exchanging a few words of remark upon the glorious prospects which ever and anon broke upon us.

Coming to a hill, which, to give breath to our horses, we "slowly did surmount on foot," Colonel Maginnis exclaimed, "Did you really have a very *odd* dream last night?" I laughed in his face, and said, "What if I had? such things are not worth thinking of."

"Humph!" he said, with a gravity that called

corresponding seriousness into my countenance; "perhaps they *are sometimes* worth thinking of! *I* at least have good reason to believe so."

The exchange of looks between the Colonel and his wife here flashed upon me, and I could not help remarking, "Are you as serious as you look upon the subject?"

"Perfectly; and if not impertinent, might I ask you what was the subject of yours? It is not mere curiosity that induces the request, as I promise to convince you."

"Frankly; but permit me first to inquire the reason of your keeping a green silk curtain before what appears to be a cabinet picture in your study, which, when you showed me over the Abbey on my arrival, I could not help noticing, but which delicacy of course revented me from then making an inquiry about?"

He looked at me very fixedly, and said, "Was *that* the subject of your dream?"

"It was. The mystery of concealment of the picture somehow or other stole into my brain after I had retired to bed, and a thousand fantastical ideas flitted across it; one, however, took deeper impression than any other, that it was the representation of *a suicide*, and so awfully depicted that you did not deem it a fit subject for your gallery, though as a gem of art you prized it."

"*A suicide!*" he exclaimed, laughing; "no, no, my dear fellow, I'll relieve you on that score—it depicts nothing of the kind; though odd enough you should dream of *that* cabinet, for the picture it contains

formed the subject, many years ago, of a curious dream. To-night we will spend a quiet hour in the study after the ladies have retired, and then, old friend, I will a strange tale unfold, containing the history of that cabinet."

We had a glorious gallop, and after discussing an excellent dinner, and passing a delightful evening, the ladies left us.

While the servant was lighting the lamps in the study, I went to look out of the drawing-room bay-window. On the lawn I thought I saw a human figure with something bulky in the arms, but which immediately on my appearance receded into the shade of the adjacent trees.

"Some assignation," thought I, and obeyed the Colonel's summons to attend him in the study.

Colonel Maginnis's Tale.

"Fourteen years since, while waiting for active service, under both Mars and Venus, I was passing a week at Brighton, in a boarding-house, whereat were domiciled for the nonce my fair cousin Matilda Pemberton and her aunt Mrs. Bloomington, a wealthy widow from whom Tilly had great expectations. There I was, watching every Gazette, ordinary and extraordinary, and every glance that shot from the sparkling eyes of my fair and lovely coz.

"One morning, after leaving the old lady and my coz shopping, I sauntered along the East Cliff. I had scarcely reached half-way, and was in the act of passing one of the streets, I forget the name, which

ran into it, when to my horror I saw an open phaeton containing an aged gentleman and a young lady, in a state of fearful terror, tearing along at a tremendous pace in the direction of the cliff, the driver having lost all command over the horse. My surprise and horror were so sudden, that almost without thought I made a mad but resolute rush and dashed at the animal's head, and by the force of a sudden and vigorous check, fortunately brought him down.

"The old gentleman, as you may imagine, was profuse in his gratitude: the young lady, his daughter, on being lifted from the vehicle, through her paleness bestowed on me one blushing glance of gratitude, and the public were by no means niggard of their approbation. Mr. Molasses—that was his name—and I exchanged cards, and, if well enough, requested my company next day to dinner, as the commencement of an acquaintance, he was pleased to say, he hoped might endure through life. As I walked back to my domicile to change my dress, somewhat disarranged, I was no small 'lion.' The next morning the paper heralded my achievement in glowing terms, and every one, *of course*, settled it that the great heiress and only child of the wealthy Molasses could not refuse *her hand* to the gallant young officer who by the use of his *own* had saved her life.

"Well! I dined with Mr. Molasses and daughter, a select party, and was *fêted* like a prince. Selina was a very pretty girl. She exhibited during the evening so many little graceful and touching displays of gratitude which a woman can alone bestow, that I was fairly nonplussed. That night, my dear fellow, what

with turtle, and toasting, cold punch, old port, champagne, and I hardly know what, I went to bed rather the worse for my exertions of every kind, and was (like you to-day) rather late at the breakfast parade, and, like you, my dear fellow, also, it was caused by a strange but not so horrible a *dream* as yours."

"Curious enough," said I; "but, Maginnis, pardon my interruption, don't you feel it very cold? I hope the window is shut."

"Oh yes!" he said; "old Johnson, my steward, would never have a window open if he could help it; and see! the curtains are down—fill another glass."

I complied, and he continued:—"At breakfast I was assailed by all kinds of raillery for my absence, and most unsparingly joked upon the conquest Miss Molasses had made of my heart. I frankly told them I had had a very funny dream; at hearing which, of course *omnes* demanded I should out with it.

"'Well, I will, whether you laugh at it or not. A Miss Jones, one of the other boarders, left the room when the laughing began, I suppose, not deeming it at all delicate for her to stop while I told my coz and her aunt my dream.

"'I dreamt that while sitting in this room, I received a small package, which, on opening, I found to contain the miniature of a young lady of attractive features, a "Forget-me-not" ring, and, more curious still, the miniature bore the initials S. M.'

"'Why, the thing is clear enough,' said Aunt Bloomington. 'S. M.! the very initials of Selina Molasses, I declare! no wonder at your dream.'

"'Upon my soul,' said I, 'I know that I shall hardly be believed, but I swear—that is, I mean to say—I don't think I ever dreamt at all about Selina Molasses!' But of course they would not have it, so after enduring a round of *badinage* for some time, I took my hat and wished them good-morning. As I strolled along the Steyne, in rather a musing mood, intending to leave my card at the proper hour at the Molasses', whose carriage should I see but theirs standing at the door of a fashionable portrait-painter! I, mechanically, as it were, walked in that direction, and arrived just at the moment Miss Molasses was leaving the house, which afforded me the opportunity of making my bow and handing her into the carriage.

"At dinner that evening I was as usual pretty well teased about my '*sweet*' friend.

"While we were at our dessert, the servant brought in a package, and handed it to me. 'I vow,' said coz Till, 'but your dream is out—do open it, let us see.' I *did;* and what was my astonishment to find, positively the realization of my *dream!* There *was* a miniature of a very pretty girl, with the initials S. M., and a '*Forget-me-not*' ring."

"Gad! curious enough," said I. At this moment of his narrative I could have sworn I heard a faint cry. "Hark, Maginnis! Stop! did not you hear a woman cry just now?"

"No," said he; "nonsense, man! we are far removed from their quarters."

"Well, go on."

"To detail their astonishment, and their assertion that it must be nothing more nor less than a *gage*

d'amour from Miss Molasses, is unnecessary; but, though rather staggered, I admit I was rather sceptical of the truth; so huddling the package into my pocket, I determined to seek Molasses and get at the fact. My endeavour to leave was strongly resisted by my coz, which only served to increase my doubt and wretchedness. Shaking her off, I lost no time in making for the house of Molasses—found he was at home, and sent in my card. Requesting to see him alone, I introduced, as well as I was able (but very frankly), the object of my visit. I placed the miniature and ring in his hand, respectfully requested him, as the most proper person, to ascertain from his daughter, without reference to me, whether she had any knowledge of them. With an air of no small astonishment, he thanked me for my candour, and with great courtesy complied, and returned with the assurance, which he said he imperatively required to be made with truth, '*that she had not the slightest knowledge of either miniature or ring!* and,' added he, 'Selina has never deceived me in her life!' I gave him my warmest thanks, and explained to him the circumstances, adding, 'I see now, and you must, sir, it is an absurd but not less malicious hoax.' Requesting he would maintain silence on the subject, I hastily retired, very much annoyed indeed, but wondering more.

"On my arrival at Mrs. Smiler's, I determined to probe the affair to the bottom. I retired to my room, declining to take tea with the circle. I found on my table a note from Matilda, asking 'very humble pardon, and stating that it was an innocent hoax in

which she and Mrs. Bloomington were alone concerned, and was caused solely by *my dream.* The portrait,' she said, 'was that of a younger sister of her aunt, long since dead, a Mrs. Murray, named Sarah—accounting for the initials; and that the ring was one of her aunt's set.' She earnestly implored forgiveness and forgetfulness on the subject, begged of all things I would not make it public in the house. She completely exonerated Miss Jones and Mrs. Smiler, *and most particularly requested me not to mention it to the former* lady, and to send the package back immediately.

"I confess I felt so much disgusted that I determined upon not subjecting myself to any further mortification. So I determined upon packing off, and took my place in the early coach for London next morning. Returning, I wrote a long deprecatory letter to my cousin, which I made up my mind she should receive, together with the articles, after I had left. The last thing was to square my account with Mrs. Smiler, who promised to send a stamped receipt in the morning. All these matters being arranged, I turned in, and 'enjoyed' a very *un*comfortable snooze.

"Early in the morning, according to my orders, I was called, and just as I had completed my toilet, the servant knocked at my door, and presented a note from Mrs. Smiler, enclosing, as I supposed, the receipt for my account. On opening it, and before I could stop myself, I read the following :—

"'Mrs. Smiler presents her compliments to Miss Jones, and begs to say, that she expects the board and lodging money due to be paid without further delay.

Mrs. S.'s system is to have a weekly settlement, and as Miss Jones does not seem to have *any probability* of hearing from her aunt in London, the sooner perhaps she takes steps to arrange with Mrs. Smiler, and leaves her house for *her aunt's*, the better. The sum due is £5, 10s.'

"This was sent me through the landlady's mistake, by inserting the wrong notes in the envelopes, as it was clearly enough directed to me, and of course my receipt had been enclosed to poor Miss Jones; but I confess the perusal of this unfeeling letter very much excited me, particularly when I brought to my mind who was the subject of it. I was always, my dear Jack, a fellow of impulse—now, truth to tell, my only feeling for Miss Jones was unmixed pity. I respected her always, her conduct commanded it; here I found her by accident, a poor young creature struggling with the world—an unfortunate young lady subject to the coarse insult of an unfeeling, rapacious Brighton lodging-house keeper. To open my pocket-book, and take a ten pound note, the half of my cash, and enclose it in the note just read, was the work of a moment; and, ringing for the servant, I asked to speak for a minute with Miss Jones.

"'The lady has just sent the same message to you, sir,' said the servant; 'she says there is some mistake about the notes from my mistress.'

"Taking the package to be delivered to my coz, and the letter in my hand, I dashed into the drawing-room; and there sat, pale as ashes, poor Miss Jones. She had just returned from a very early walk, and was of course *en déshabille*. Without waiting for her

to speak, I said, 'I believe our *kind* friend, Mrs. Smiler, has made a mistake—now don't speak—thank God *she has;*' and I took her hand, and pressing her epistle with its enclosure into it, shook it warmly. She became violently agitated. 'Allow me, Miss Jones,' said I, 'to request you will be kind enough to give this package and letter to my cousin Matilda.' She faltered out a 'most happy,' but looked somehow or other, Jack, most *unhappy*. I don't know how it is *with you*, but I suppose we have much the same temperament; but I never see a woman agitated but I feel a desperate anxiety to alleviate her miseries by a kiss. This I did to Miss Jones, and hastily left the room, bidding her 'good-bye,' to which she feebly replied.

"I went to the coach-office, and while they were horsing and loading, penned the following note:—

"'Pardon me for what I have done—never think of repayment until we meet again; should such an occurrence never happen, I most heartily wish you every happiness, and that your virtues and accomplishments may meet with their deserved reward.'

"To this I put no name, and giving a porter sixpence to take it, jumped on the coach.

"'Well!' quoth I to myself, as we rattled along, the morning breeze invigorating my cheek, as the last event had my heart, 'old fellow! if you have missed your chance of a *rich* lady, you have had the satisfaction of serving a *poor* one.'

"I found, upon my arrival in town, that I was appointed to the —th, under *immediate orders* (pleasant, eh?) to replace the —th, at Jamaica.

who, having adopted the tea and coffee slip-slop system, instead of port and bottled porter, had died off like rotten sheep. What with writing letters, making the thousand and one arrangements in outfitting, and all the etceteras, ten days found me at the *depôt* at Cork.

"What happened in the wearisome twelve years I passed under a tropical sun is immaterial now."

"D—n me! Maginnis," said I, starting up, "but I'll swear I heard *a groan*."

"Pooh! nonsense, man! You are full of your whimsies and fancies; you can't get that dream out of your head. Fill your glass—that's right.—Suffice it to say, that I went out an ensign, and returned senior major; you know my rank now. I had two attacks of the yellow fever, but it fortunately failed to floor me; and I had a nurse too — poor affectionate creature!"

Here the Colonel heaved a deep sigh, and was for some moments silent. During this silence, methought, while I puffed my cigar, I heard his *sigh* most distinctly responded to; but not wishing to disturb his reverie, and really thinking it must be mere fancy, I made no remark.

"I came home with a shattered constitution; but my native air did wonders, and Cheltenham the rest.

"I had hardly been a fortnight at that gay resort, when one morning, taking 'my constitutional,' as it is termed, after leaving the Spa, I met in the promenade a lady, whose earnest gaze attracted me: our eyes met, and the mutual glance could not be mistaken. I knew the face, but—where was it? She

rapidly moved on to a small but elegant phaeton, drawn by a pair of exquisitely handsome ponies, and drove quickly off. I strained my gaze after the vehicle; but even the livery was unknown, as was the lady's name, though I felt assured that I had seen her before; but, alas! twelve years' absence, Jack, makes a woful inroad upon one's memory.

"'Pray, sir,' said I, addressing one of those gentlemen who know (or profess to know) everybody at every fashionable watering-place, '*who is* that lady?'

"'Bless my soul! Major, *not* to know her, does, as the poet says, argue yourself unknown; that is Miss Mol—Mor—bless my soul! how stupid of me!—I really quite forget the name *just* now—but she's the great heiress, and one of the most estimable of ladies.'

"'Mol—Mor,' thought I; 'great heiress? who the devil can she be? a Miss, too!' Well, I bothered myself with thinking, until I gave it up. I went home after half an hour's ramble, and, to my surprise, who should I find in the hall, waiting my arrival, but a servant dressed in the *very livery* of the lady of the phaeton!

"'Major Maginnis, I presume, sir,' said he.—I bowed, and he respectfully handed me a *petit billet*, in which the following was written in a *very* tremulous hand:—

"'If Major Maginnis will condescend to honour *one* he *knew*, and *served*, and *saved* at Brighton, previous to his departure for the West Indies *twelve years* since, with the pleasure of an interview, the bearer has instructions to await his convenience to convey him to her house.'

"'Oh! ho!' said I, 'the murder's out. Miss Molasses, by Jove! the rich heiress! Selina Molasses still a Miss, too!' So I sent word down to the servant to wait, and I dressed myself to look as well as a yellow-visaged, tropic-tanned fellow not turned forty, might. In a few minutes, I was whirled along in an elegant chariot (not the phaeton) to a very pretty villa outside the town, and in less than a quarter of an hour found myself admiring the elegant arrangements of one of the most tasteful and *recherché* drawing-rooms eye ever beheld.

"At length a gentle hand opened the door; and now for the encounter full of smiles! I bowed so *profoundly*, that when I raised my eyes towards the lady, my sudden start must have looked quite stagefied. Good heavens! who did I behold on the sofa, dissolved in tears?"

"Miss Molasses," said I, "of course!"

"No, Jack! MISS JONES!—there she sat, dressed in the *very same humble morning* costume she had on when I last beheld her at Brighton! Every recollection rushed upon me with the vividness of lightning."

"Do you keep a dog in the room?" said I, fidgeting; "for, upon my soul, there is some one here, I'll swear."

"Nonsense!" said Maginnis; "don't interrupt me. Well, well, you seem fidgety, so I'll be brief.—There is no necessity to recount to you the hours of rapture that we passed; it is sufficient to say, that quick as time and fleet horses would allow, the rich heiress, Miss *Morgan*"—

"Miss who? I thought you said *Jones!*"

"So she *once* was; but 'twas changed to *Morgan*, for reasons presently,—was the bride of your humble servant."

"Humph!" I replied, "you've been a very lucky fellow, Maginnis. So Miss Jones, while you had the *yellow* fever abroad, was nursing for *twelve* long years the *scarlet* one for you at home, eh? But what about the cabinet?"

"Spare me a little longer.—After we had solemnized our nuptials at Gretna, previous to our more formal union in England, and were spending the honeymoon, our conversation often recurred to our Brighton days, and the following is a brief abstract of the events.

"The morning we parted she was most wretched, for it appears, although I was quite unconscious of it, she deeply loved me, but never told her love. Her expectations rested upon a rich aunt, an old maid, who treated her very cruelly. She had not a penny to satisfy the demands of Mrs. Smiler on that morning; and, what was worse, on seeking for some loved token-trinkets, to endeavour to raise some money temporarily, she found her desk had been opened, and the articles abstracted!

"'Gracious Heaven!' said I, 'can it be possible? What infamy! The miniature and the ring *yours*, and taken to delude *me* by my cousin Matilda!—infamous! infamous!'

"'It is all—all passed, and long ago forgiven,' said the angel.

"'Did *you* deliver the package that contained them?' said I.

"'Yes! and, covered with the deepest confusion, she handed me your letter, and implored my forgiveness. The miniature was the picture of my married sister, who died in giving birth to her only son; she was like me, but much lovelier. The ring was her dying gift—her name was Sophia Masters; and I believe that Mrs. Smiler, the landlady, having seen them in my possession, suggested the plan to obtain them, the initials so curiously being the same, S. M., to practise the fraud upon you.'

"'There is no fraud now, at least,' said I; 'my dream has come true; I *have married* the owner of the *miniature* and the *ring*, and who was and is S. M.'

"''Tis curious, indeed,' said my dear *Susan;* 'but let me go on. The very morning when you left, I determined to await the arrival of the post for the expected succour from my aunt, so long and so unaccountably delayed, with the firm intention of returning your kind gift through your cousin; but your note from the coach-office changed my mind. *That* post brought me a communication from my aunt's solicitor, stating that she had suddenly died, and that about an hour before she died she sent for her lawyer and, by a codicil, revoked her will, leaving me her sole legatee and heiress to fifty thousand pounds. What with the revulsion of fortune, the *loss of you*, and a thousand conflicting sensations, I became seriously ill; but under the kind care and attention of Dr. T——, in about a week I was enabled to return to town to attend the obsequies of my deceased aunt, and take possession of my fortune,

and, according to the will, the name of "Morgan," which was that of my aunt. I did so, determined never to surrender it but to *one*—my loved—my long-loved Maginnis. Heaven has vouchsafed to hear my prayer, and to consummate my happiness!'

"You recollect I enclosed her a bank note for ten pounds;—it may be whim or what *you* please to call it, *but she never parted with that note*, strictly interpreting my letter 'never to repay IT but when we *met;*' so she had it framed and placed in a cabinet made for the purpose—the one you see before you. One day at an exhibition she saw a portrait strongly resembling me, and had one copied which even bore a still stronger resemblance, and with her own hand placed them in the *same cabinet*—here they are."

We looked, and there certainly was the bank note, as described. There, too, underneath, was Maginnis's portrait; but in place of that of his lady was the portrait of a very beautiful Spanish girl, with an infant boy in her arms, the very image of the Colonel. Underneath were the words in gold, "*Maraquita.*"

"Mysterious Powers!" cried Maginnis, his whole frame convulsed with agitation, and his visage turning ghastly pale; "by what agency came this change? can it be true?" and he snatched it from the cabinet, and gazed upon it with quivering eye and trembling hand. "'Tis Maraquita! and my little Carlos; but how came it here? Can it be possible?—yes! yes! it must have been *her* act. You say, my friend, you heard noises during the evening; let us search."

I rushed on the lawn, but saw no one, as the moon shed her beams on the sward. Returning, I care-

fully bolted the door and placed the shutters fast, and searched the room, without effect. Rousing Maginnis, who seemed sunk in thought, I stated the fruitlessness of further search at so late an hour, and ventured on an inquiry as to the mysterious "*Maraquita.*" Looking at me steadfastly, he said, "Of Maraquita, my friend, we will speak anon. She lived with me in Jamaica, and bore me that child," pointing to the portrait. "A mysterious communication I received some few days since, stating she was in England, and in this neighbourhood, is now accounted for. It is evident she is, and has gained, by some means or another, entrance, not only to this house, but to this room, and to the secret cabinet. Ha!" said he; "by heavens, it rushes on me!—last night *I thought*, while sitting here and gazing, as is my wont sometimes, on the token of earlier days, ere I seek my bed, *I thought* I heard sounds similar to those you fancied. *She must* have been here *and exchanged the portraits*, and obtained entrance by the door. A lady in black, too, was, I heard, inquiring for me at the lodge to-day, and obtained permission to walk in the grounds. We will search instantly."

"Not so, my friend! not so! It would be useless; consider Mrs. Maginnis's condition—your absence, and agitated appearance, if you deny yourself your night's repose, will seriously alarm her—to-morrow at morn I will accompany you." After some time he assented, and after locking the portrait in his private desk, we parted.

I tried to sleep, but could not, and after enduring two hours or so, in attempted slumber, and urged by

an intense curiosity, at the grey dawn I walked in the grounds. I had been out, I suppose, about half an hour, when I took the direction of an avenue which led to the banks of the river. I could hardly account for it, but a fearful apprehension seemed to cover my mind, which was engrossed with the mysterious Spanish girl, when I gazed on the dark stream, as yet unsparkling in the sunbeam, stealing mournfully, and silently, and swiftly along its romantic and thickly-wooded banks. On a sudden, the sound of voices on the water struck upon my ear, and immediately after, a boat, containing two fishermen, appeared, who were rowing hard against a strong current, that set round a winding in the river. In a short time, they saw me on the bank, and crossed the stream, making signs; it was evident they wished me to await their arrival. They soon made the shore, and pointing in the direction of a little village on the opposite bank, made me understand they wished me to go with them. A mysterious impulse led me to immediately assent, and in a few minutes the swift and favouring current brought us to the landing-place of the village of C——. A crowd had collected around the door of the small inn with awe-struck visages. On entering to ascertain the cause, what was my horror at perceiving the lifeless form of a young female, found floating in the river. One look at the face—the glance was enough—the features, though newly known, now indelibly impressed!—'twas hers of the CABINET PICTURE, MARAQUITA! It shot through my brain!

My dream of the SUICIDE *was realized.*

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